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A

COLLECTION

OF THE

TRACTS

OF A CERTAIN

FREE ENQUIRER,

Peter Annet.

NOTED BY HIS

SUFFERINGS

FOR HIS

OPINIONS.

Legite et Judicate.

JUDGING for OURSELVES;

OR

FREE-THINKING,

The GREAT

DUTY of RELIGION.

BRITISH MUSEUM

(1)

JUDGING for OURSELVES;

OR

FREE-THINKING,

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DUTY of RELIGION.

Diſplay'd in

Two LECTURES, delivered at *Plaiſterer's-Hall.*

Jan: 25 & Feb: 1. 1738/9

By P. A. ~~Miniſter of the Goſpel.~~ mer.

addreſs'd to the new Sect of Methodists
Faith Monzers & Bigots with a Poem to the Rev.d Mr Whitefield

While we take the Senſe of the Scriptures *upon Content*, and ſee not with our own Eyes, we inſenſibly relapſe into the *Principles of Popery*, and give up the *only Ground* on which we can juſtify our Separation from the Church of *Rome*.——Let us lay aſide that *Malignant, Arbitrary, Perſecuting, Popiſh* Spirit; let us put no Fetters on Mens Underſtandings, nor any other Bounds to their Enquiries, but what *God and Truth* have ſet, p. 32.

Difficulties and Diſcouragements, &c. by a Preſbyter of the Church of *England*.

LONDON:

Printed for the AUTHOR; and ſold by T. Cox, at the *Lamb*, under the *Royal-Exchange*, MDCCXXXIX.

NB The Preface to this Pamp is omitted. Also the Poem.

BRITISH MUSEUM

LECTURE I.

SIRS,

THE Intention of these Lectures is not to set up any *new* Religion, but to illustrate the *old* which was from the Beginning; containing such Laws as are most fit for *God* to give, and *Man* to receive, agreeable to the Nature of both, correspondent to the Moral fitness of Things, and tending to promote the Happiness of the human Species—Nor is the Design of these Lectures to dictate any new Forms of Faith, or prescribe new Modes of Worship, but to vindicate the *Right* which every Man has, to search out, and judge of *Truth* for himself, and declare it to others; as also to pursue what appears to be the best and most certain Method of attaining it. To do this, every one should endeavour to inform his own Judgment aright, and be directed by it; as every one should use his own Senses for the Management of his own Affairs. Therefore I have chosen for the Subject of this Discourse, those Words of *Jesus Christ*, mentioned in *Luke* xii. 57. an Expression becoming the Son of God. *Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?* This to excite and promote is designed by these Lectures; that *Truth* may be displayed, and all *false Ways* exploded; that Men's Opinions and their Deeds, being brought to the Light of human Understanding, it may be manifest what Works are *wrought of God*: For *every one that does Evil hates the Light; therefore comes not to it, lest his Deeds should be reproved; but he that loves Truth, comes to the Light, that his Deeds may be manifest, they are wrought in God*, (John iii. 20, 21.)

Let us all, that would have *firm* Building, look well to the *Foundation* we purpose to erect it on, that our Labour may stand. If we build never so well on a sandy Foundation or false Bottom, the Structure will not stand the Trial. No Foundation less than the unchangeable Being of all Perfection, on whom the universal Fabric is erected, is the sure Basis of Eternal Truth. All that we can see, and all that we cannot see, depend on him; *We are all his Offspring*, the World, and

every Part of it; *in him all live and move and have their Being.* His *Works* diſplay his *Will:* They are the Declaration of the Divine Mind. For God is inacceſſible and inconceivable but by and thro' theſe; they are the manifeſtation of his Wiſdom; by theſe the Divinity is made known to Man, as *every tree is known by its Fruits.* The Wiſdom of God is revealed by the Works and Laws of Nature. The wiſe Philoſophers of old built their Doctrine on this Platform. This Foundation God himſelf has laid, and better can no Man lay; a Foundation which does not depend on the fallible Credit of human Teſtimony.

The ingenious Mr. *Lock* ſays, what I wiſh every one could ſay, "*Truth* has been my only Aim, "and wherever that has appear'd "to *lead*, my Thoughts have "impartially *followed*, without "minding whether the Footſteps "of any other lay that Way or "no. Not that I want a due "reſpect to other Men's Opi-"nions, but after all, *the great-"eſt Reverence is due to Truth*; "and I hope it will not be "thought Arrogance to ſay, that "perhaps we ſhould make a "greater Progreſs in the Diſco-"very of rational and contem-"plative Knowledge, if we ſought "it in the *Fountain*, in the Con-"ſideration of Things them-"ſelves, and rather made uſe of "our *own Thoughts* than *other "Mens*, to find it: For I think "we may as rationally hope *to "ſee with other Mens Eyes*, as *to "know by other Mens Underſtand-"ings.* So much as we ourſelves "comprehend of *Truth* and *Rea-"ſon*, ſo much we poſſeſs of *real "and true Knowledge.* The float-"ing of *other* Mens Opinions in "our own Brains, makes us not "one Jot the more knowing "though they happen to be true; "what in them is *Science*, is in "us but an *obſtinate Conceit*, whilſt "we give up our Aſſent only to "*Reverend Names*, and do not as "they did, imploy our *own Rea-"ſon* to underſtand thoſe *Truths* "which gave them Reputation."

Thus far Mr. *Lock*, whoſe fine way of Reaſoning, carries its own Authority with it.

In proſecuting this Subject I ſhall

Firſt, Shew the Benefits that accrue by judging Truth for ourſelves as Proteſtants, and that the contrary Doctrine is Popery.

Secondly, Diſplay the Neceſſity of free Examination, by a notable Example from Scripture.

Thirdly, Anſwer ſome Objections againſt it. And

Laſtly, Vindicate the Glory of human Reaſon, by obſerving the wretched Conſequences that follow the not adhering to it.

Firſt, The Benefit of *judging for ourſelves* is evident from the *reaſonableneſs* of ſo doing: If that Doctrine, which is moſtly contended for, carried *rational Demonſtration* with it, how lovely would it appear! But ſince the *fooliſhneſs of Preaching* has been advanced in the room of *Wiſdom*, and *Authority* in the room of *Reaſon*, *Truth* has been blaſphem'd, and her Admirers ſtigmatized with opprobrious Appellations.

That Men ſhould be diſcountenanc'd from exerting their natural

tural Right of judging for themſelves, *Free-thinkers*, I mean, *ſober Enquirers* are called *Deiſts*, and rank'd in one Claſs with *Atheiſts*. —Preachers in this Age being preſs'd with *Reaſon* contrary to their *Intereſts*, for fear of expoſing the *Craft*, by which they have their *Gain*, to the *Honeſt* and *Sincere*, give up the Cauſe to *Popery*, by advancing *Faith upon Authority not to be examined*. Ought not Men to give a *Reaſon* for their *Faith?* by *judging for themſelves* they will be able to do it.

Nor can then ſo much *unreaſonable Faith* paſs current among us as it does; *Faith* which pleads *Authority* for its *Baſis*, in oppoſition to *Reaſon and common Senſe*, is the *ſhame of Religion*. To take up Religion upon *Truſt*, is not to have any of ones *own*. If a *Proteſtant* takes up Principles upon *Credit* without daring to examine them, What does he more than others? Do not even the *Papiſts* ſo? What Reaſon has he to proteſt againſt *Popery*, or diſſent from it, ſince both build upon the ſame Bottom? The ſame Arguments that *ſupport* the one, *maintain* the other; both walk Blindfold, and both muſt fall into the Ditch of Shame and Confuſion.

It would be Matter of ſurprize, if we knew not the Cauſe, to hear Teachers declare their Fears, that Men will be perverted by making *Reaſon their Rule*; but when *Reaſon* is aboliſhed, it can be no ſurprize at all, that ſuch Teachers ſhould impoſe on their Believers the greateſt *Abſurdities* for *pious Creeds*. Whoever affirms or maintains for Doctrine that *Reaſon and Faith are at Variance*, or that Articles of *Faith* are not to be examined at the Bar of human Judgment, affirms and maintains that Doctrine which is the *Root* of all the Lyes and lying Wonders of *Impoſtors*; of all the falſe Doctrines of *Papiſts*, and *Pagans*; of all their *Superſtition* and *Trumpery*; and of the *Perſecutions* thence ariſing, and has *trampled under Foot the Blood of thoſe Sons of God*, if I may ſo call them, who to defend their *Right of judging for themſelves* againſt *Authority*, ſuffered the fiery Trial in Queen *Mary*'s Reign, and purchaſed Redemption for us with their Blood, from the intolerable cruelty of the Papal Yoke, from the *Impoſition*, *Tyranny* and *Barbarity* of that Church, than which there *never was or can be a worſe*. Ought not the Principles that produced ſuch inhuman Practices to ſtand for ever *condemn'd*, and ſuch Liberty as thoſe glorious Martyrs died to defend, deſerve to be *everlaſtingly* eſpouſed? Can their Death ever ceaſe to adorn with *refulgent Glory* the *Proteſtant Cauſe*, or diſplay in *horrid and deteſtable Colours* the moſt *barbarous ſacerdotal Tyrany of Rome*, that Church of *Anti-Chriſt*, of which the Worſhip of *Moloch* was but a *dull Type* and *faint Reſemblance?*—To the Virtues and Blood of thoſe martyr'd Heroes, the Proteſtant Cauſe in all likelihood owes its very Exiſtence in this Iſland, and Continuance among us at this Day. May the glorious Cauſe of Liberty which they eſpouſed, be eternized among us, and the religious Freedom which this Nation *now* enjoys, be ever preſerved and ſhine with *augmented Luſtre* to all ſucceeding Generations; for ſurely, as a fine Author expreſſes it, *a Day, an Hour's glorious Liberty,*

is worth a whole Eternity in Bondage!

If it be all Men's natural Right to *think*, and *judge freely* for themſelves, and *freely* to *declare* their Judgment, What Reaſon can be given for the violent Outcries we meet with againſt the uſe of this Liberty, and all Attempts in its Defence? 'Tis this, the Enjoyment of this Right is ſo deſtructive to *Prieſtcraft*, that it is impoſſible theſe two can ſtand together; they are irreconcileable as *Light* and *Darkneſs*, as *God* and *Mammon*; 'tis the Axe that is laid to the Root of that *accurſed Tree*; I mean the *Craft* of ſuch as are for governing Mankind *without permitting them to make uſe of their Senſe and Reaſon*, for I have no Intention to condemn any whole Set of Men, but ſuch only as are *blind Leaders of the Blind*, eaſily known by their *Doctrines*, in oppoſition to *Reaſon*, and *Wolves in Sheeps cloathing*, alike known by their *Works*, *Pride*, *Tyranny*, *Faction*, *Perſecution*, and *all Uncharitableneſs*.

Throughout the whole World, all Contenders for Religious Syſtems rejoice when they have *Reaſon* on their Side, and chuſe it for their Defence rather than any Thing elſe; They will *uſe* and *ſtand* by *Reaſon* when it will be of *uſe to and ſtand by them*. Nor do they ever *contemn* its Authority, but when it *condemns* theirs: But as in *ſome* Caſes *all* Religions allow of reaſonable Defence, or *none* would ſtand; ſo in many others, all Syſtems of Religion founded on Tradition, ſhut out *Reaſon* from Enquiry, and will not admit it to enter.

The *Myſtery-Mongers* all over the World have barred the Door againſt *private Judgment*; thoſe *Moral Truths* of theirs, that will bear Enquiry, they will bring to the *Light*, and ſhow them in the beſt Colours. Turn them *over and over*; you may view them *through and through*. They like *honeſt* Dealers will warrant their Goods to be *ſound*, ſuch as will endure *good wearing*; and perhaps if but tolerable, they will boaſt that there is not the like.——But they know as well that their *artful* or *myſterious Principles* will not bear to be ſo expoſed.

All clandeſtine Dealers conceal their Impoſitions, Extortions, and bad Wares, under ſome Craft or Myſtery. That is a *tender Point* and muſt not be touched. And no Wonder; for if a *Trader* ſhould ſuffer his *bad* Goods to be *expoſed*, and the *Art* by which he *gloſſes them over*, to be made known to all Comers and inquiſitive Perſons, that the *Faults* of the Wares, and the *Impoſitions* of the *Seller* might be eaſily ſeen: Who would be *Cuſtomers?* If the *Myſteries* of the *ſpiritual Craftſmen* were expoſed, by Reaſon no Man would buy their Merchandize any more. Depend upon it, when you are hoodwinked with *Myſteries ſupernatural*, there is *Fraud* in the Caſe; 'tis but another Word for it; the Meaning is the ſame. Whatever is impoſed on Men to believe, which will not bear the *Light of honeſt Enquiry*, is all *Craft and Guile*. *Truth* is *open* and *free*, it has no *ſculkling Holes* nor *dark Corners*. As *he that doth Truth bringeth his Deeds to the Light*, ſo he that ſpeaks Truth brings his Words and Doctrines to the Light, that it may *be manifeſt they are wrought in God*.

As

As the Right and Uſefulneſs of *private Judgment* is in *part* allowed by *all*, ſo it has its *Times* too, when it is more or leſs inculcated or ſuppreſſed; was the Diſpute againſt the *Papiſts*, it would be aſſerted; was the Contention againſt *Free-thinkers*, it would be denied: When Men *are perſecuted*, they *maintain* it; when Men would ſuppreſs or *perſcute others*, they *deny* or *limit* it. When it ſuits Mens *Intereſts* it is *right*; when it does *not* it is *wrong*. So once the *ſlaviſh Doctrine of Paſſive-Obedience and Non-Reſiſtance* was generally advanced by Eccleſiaſtics thirſting for Power to enſlave Mankind, but ſince they were diſappointed it has ſlept in Silence. If they had ſucceeded, we had all been *damned* into it. If that Doctrine was right *then*, it would have been right *for ever*. But as it was *wrong then*, ſo it *never will be right*. Examine therefore all *Time-ſerving Doctrines*, and depend upon it, that which is right *once* is right *for ever*. Truth is *Eternal*, and like God admits of no Variation; nor can it *change* with the capricious Humour and Intereſts of Men.

I ſhall now in the *ſecond* Place illuſtrate the Neceſſity there is of judging for ourſelves by a remarkable Example recorded in the Old Teſtament, 1 *Kings* xiii. I ſhall firſt give you ſo much of the Relation as is neceſſary, and then apply it.

In the Time of *Jeroboam King of Iſrael* came a Prophet from *Judah* to *Bethel* and propheſied againſt the *Altar* there while the King was ſacrificing, but tho' the King invited him home to his Houſe, he refuſed, ſaying, that he had been charged by the Word of the Lord not to eat Bread nor drink Water in that Place; and obedient to the profeſſed Charge, without eating or drinking, he went homewards another way than he came. But an old Prophet at *Bethel* that had heard of it, enquired which Way he went, ſaddled his Aſs, went after him, overtook him, and prevailed upon him by urging *the Word of the Lord* for his Authority, to come back, that he might eat and drink with him; he returned, fearing no Danger from a *Brother Prophet*. Now when they had eat and drank together, the Word of the Lord came to the old Prophet while they were ſitting at the Table, and told the Prophet of *Judah*, that for his coming back, and eating and drinking with him, contrary to his own private command of the Lord, his Body ſhould never be laid in the Grave of his Fathers; and ſo it was, that as he was going home on an Aſs, a Lyon met him, and killed him, and ſtood by the Carcaſe, but neither devoured it, nor hurt the Aſs. This ſeveral Men *paſſed by*, and *ſaw*, and ſome of them told it to the old Prophet of *Bethel*, who ſaddled his Aſs, went and found it as reported; and without fearing at all the Lyon that ſtood by, tho' he had by *Lying* been the *Cauſe* of his *Tranſgreſſion* and *Death*, took the Carcaſe from before the *Face of the Lyon*, laid it on the Aſs that ſtood juſt by, brought it to *Bethel*, and buried it there.

This is the Narration in Brief, now for the Application,

Hence the *Neceſſity of judging for ourſelves is apparent*, for it was not

not the *lying Prophet* that ſuffer'd, but he that was *deceiv'd* by his Lies. And as it was then, ſo it is now. It is not the *deceiving Prieſts* that ſuffer, but the *deceived Laity*. Hence we may learn, that every one ought to regard the evident Inſpiration of God in his own Breaſt; I mean the Convictions of *Wiſdom* and *Virtue*, more than all the *pretended Word of the Lord* in Oppoſition to it, from any Perſon whatſoever.

We ſhould certainly believe none that come in the Name of the Lord, when we have good Evidence or plain Reaſon to the Contrary. If a *true* Prophet can propheſy *Lies*, and *true* Prophets may be *deceived* by thoſe Lies; how careful ſhould we be to *try* the Spirits, and *not believe* any of them without *inconteſtible Evidence?* And with what Care ſhould we judge for ourſelves what is right from the *Reaſon and Nature of Things?* that we may not be miſled by *pretended* Authority, by *Lies* in the Name of God, and *Enthuſiaſtic Deluſions*. If it be ſo *dangerous* for one Prophet to *believe* another, and ſo *hard* to know whether a Prophet ſpeaks *true* or *falſe*, how careful ſhould we be in *believing!* How dangerous is it to take *Truth* upon Truſt or Authority! How many are deceived with the *pretended Word of the Lord*, and believe what is impoſed upon them under that Sanction, (tho' ever ſo abſurd) rather than common Senſe! to which ſhould any *object*, he may expect for *Anſwer*, *Who art thou, O Man, that replieſt againſt God?* Altho' the Reply be not againſt *God*, but againſt *him* only, that profanely ſanctifies his Lies with that ſacred Name.—If any one ſhould think that the Prophet of *Bethel* and the Royal Beaſt were in the Intereſt of the King, let him learn from hence, that whenſoever the Craft of State and Religion are join'd together, People ſhould be very much upon their Guard, and arm themſelves againſt the ſolemn Conſpiracy, and grave Deceit.

Thirdly, I now proceed to anſwer ſome *Objections* againſt this Right of every Man's judging for himſelf.

Obj. 1. *If every Man takes this Liberty, perhaps Men may doubt of the ſacred Scriptures, and call in Queſtion the Truths contained in them.* Well, and what if they do? *Truth* can bear being called in Queſtion. Things *really ſacred* muſt *ever* remain ſo, no *Interrogations* can render them otherwiſe; by this Means their *Sanctity* will appear. The *more* Truth is enquired into, the *leſs* will Men doubt of it; becauſe they will know it the better. Truth diſcovers itſelf to the diligent Inquiſitor: *Seek and you ſhall find.* If the *Scriptures* are *Truth*, they will bear Examination; if they are not, let 'em go: But as they contain *Truth*, 'tis our Buſineſs to find it out, to ſearch of what *Nature* it is, for what *End* it was given, and to what *Benefit* it tends.

Object. 2. *If Men take the Liberty of judging as they pleaſe for themſelves, they will learn to dictate to their Superiors, and contemn Authority.* To this I anſwer, that Men can never be the further from *doing* their Duty becauſe they *know* it. Men will not hereby become *Rebels* to their Governours, *ſpiritual* or *temporal*, except their Governours become *Tyrants*. If the Con-

Conſequence be, the rouzing Men to the *Senſe* of *Liberty*, and the Love of it, is the Argument ever the worſe? If it ſhould tend to the Downfal of *Tyrants* and *Impoſtors*, it can never be the Cauſe of *Rebellion* againſt *good* and *wiſe Governours*. Men, becauſe they are well-inſtructed, and rendered more knowing, can never contemn thoſe to whom they owe their *Liberty*, *Civil*, and *Religious*; but promote rather the Freedom and Happineſs of Mankind. By this alone will the Calling of the Jews, and the Fulneſs of the Gentiles be brought in. By this alone can *the Knowledge of the Lord cover the Earth*. By this alone eternal Peace will be eſtabliſhed in the Religious World, Men *ſhall beat their Swords into Plow-ſhares, and their Spears into pruning Hooks*; *Nation ſhall not lift up Sword againſt Nation, neither ſhall they learn War any more* for the Cauſe of Religion.

Again, Though Men take the Liberty of judging what is *Truth* for themſelves, and though the advancing this Doctrine be the crying down the *Markets* of the *Spiritual Traders*; though this be indeed as with a *Scourge of ſmall Cords*, to *whip thoſe Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple, to overturn the Tables of the Money Changers*, and the proud and ſecure *Seats* of them that ſell the Holy Ghoſt; yet there is not that Danger I could wiſh ariſing from it: The *Buyers* and *Sellers*, the *Bigots* and *Prieſts* will unite again; the *Trade* is likely to continue to the End of the World; for Men being born ignorant, perverted by Education, prepoſſeſſed with Notions before they have Senſe or Reaſon to judge of them, which ſome never have Capacities to do, and others thro' *Cowardice* or *Idleneſs* never make uſe of the Capacities they have; there is no Fear but the *Myſtery-mongers* will always find Fools enough to buy their *ſophiſticated Wares*: The *honeſt* indeed *may*, and *ought* to be adviſed how to judge of them, and carefully to inſpect the *Artifices* of thoſe that put 'em off.

Object. 3. *What muſt thoſe do that have not Capacities to judge for themſelves? or how can Men judge in abſtruſe and difficult Caſes?* To this it may be anſwered, That what is required of Man, is the Exerciſe of the *Talents* they have; not, what they have not. To be able to diſtinguiſh *right* from *wrong* in *common* Things, is enough for *common* Capacities; *abſtruſe* and *difficult* Caſes are generally ſuch as the *generality* of Men have nothing to do with. Things *above* our Reach it is beſt to let alone. What we cannot come at 'tis in vain to ſtrive for. *Secret Things* beyond human Capacity *belong to God*; but *Things that are revealed*, that is, ſuch as we can underſtand, *pertain to us, and our Children*. There can be no Reaſon to ſuppoſe that God delights to *puzzle* the *weak* Capacities of his Creatures; that which is above Reaſon is not calculated for human intellects. *Incomprehenſible Myſteries*, though Truth, may *confound*, but cannot *convince* us; may make us *wretched*, but can never make us *happy*.

I now come to the 4th and laſt Objection. *If every Man ſhould ſet up to be his own judge in Matters of Religion, this will occaſion a democracy of Opinions; the whole Nation will be a Babel of Notions, as in the Times of the Heathen Philoſophers.*

Phers. Well, and what if it ſhould prove ſo? Will *bare* Opinions hurt any Body? They may occaſion a *combat of Words*, and break out into a *Paper War*, very much to the Advantage of all concerned in the Conſumption of that Manufacture, and very much to the Advantage of Trade, and Learning: But it muſt be very ridiculous to proceed to the knocking together of *Logger-heads*, pardon the Expreſſion, unleſs the *thickneſs* of a Skull can prove the *Solidity* of an Argument. Beſides, by the *literary Combat* a *beautiful Converſion* is brought about, whereby *contemptible Rags* become the *choiceſt Treaſure* of *Noblemen* and *Philoſophers*.

Finally, the *Glory* of human Reaſon will evidently appear, from the *wretched* Conſequences that attend the *not* adhering to it. This one Thing is enough to prove *all* that has been ſaid. If we are not to judge for ourſelves what is right from the *Reaſon* and *Nature* of Things, we may eaſily be toſſed about with *every Wind of Doctrine*, and have our Brains turned with every Whirlpool of Enthuſiaſm; we may eaſily truckle to any domineering Church or Prieſt, and kneel down to any God.

He that may be damn'd *out* of his Reaſon, may be damn'd *into* any Opinion. Nothing can be too monſtrous to his *pliable Timidity*, or too ſhocking to his *eaſy Credulity*, if it be well *pointed with Damnation*. If human *Judgment* be thrown down, human *Authority* muſt be ſet up in its room; and that Authority muſt not be examined by Reaſon, for if it be, Reaſon will pull it down.

Pretended Inſpiration, ſuperior to all rational Examination, has been the *greateſt Adverſary* that ever *Reaſon* had in the World. All Authority againſt human Underſtanding, is founded upon *this*, even upon *this Affirmation*; That there *are*, or *have been*, ſome Men ſo divinely taught *immediately* from God, that to queſtion their *Fidelity*, to doubt of their *Veracity*, or not *indubitably* to receive their *Sayings*, is to call to Account GOD HIMSELF. Their Sentiments or Writings are ſtampt with his ſacred Name, to give the better *Sanction* to all they ſay. Hence the *Power* of the Church, and of every uſurping Prieſt, to explain what bears the Name of *Sacred* and *Holy*, ſo called, to awe Men into a Belief of 'em without Enquiry. Take away the Grave and Prieſtly *Damnation*, for not believing them; and the *honeſt* World would naturally think they had as much Right to judge of *them* as of any Thing elſe: For the *Scriptures*, however deify'd, without our *own Reaſon*, cannot lead us to *Truth*; however ſtrange it may ſound in the Ears of ſome, and though we receive them in the *Lump*, they are not *all alike* worthy of our Reception: For by the Teſt of human Enquiry, we ſhall clearly ſee many Things in another Light, when ſtripped of all the Mask and Diſguiſe in which they are commonly repreſented; for the common Senſe of Mankind can eaſily determine, at leaſt as to *Matters of Fact*, by their *Agreement*, what may have the probability of *Truth*; and by their *Diſagreement*, what cannot poſſibly deſerve that ſacred Name. It is no wonder that *Proteſtants*, taking

ing the *bare Scripture*, without the Aſſiſtance of *ſuperior Reaſon* for their Guide, run into ſo many *Enthuſiaſtic Notions*, and even into *Popery itſelf:* For believing the *Letter of the Scripture infallibly true*, and not to be explain'd by Reaſon, and reading thoſe Words of *Jeſus Chriſt*, which he ſaid of the Bread, *This is my Body*; and of the Wine, *This is my Blood*; and that *except ye eat the Fleſh of the Son of Man, and drink his Blood, ye have no Life in you*; with ſuch like Expreſſions, and abjuring all Reaſon's Comments or Explications, as the *Wiſdom of the carnal Mind*; he naturally concludes from the Premiſes, that the Doctrine of *Tranſubſtantiation* is *right*; Conſequently the *Church of Rome* which maintains it: This Difficulty being got over, he never ſcruples the reſt of her Doctrines; for he that can ſwallow that *Bolus* of a *Wafer* for a God, no *Eccleſiaſtic Doſe* can choke him; and ſo goes over to *that* Church; which *compaſſes Sea and Earth to make one Proſelyte*, who when ſo made, is render'd *twofold more the Child of Hell than themſelves*. This Convert being now well loaded with *Zeal* and *Ignorance*, Eccleſiaſtic *Powder* and *Ball*, there is one *Blunderbuſs* more *charged* againſt the *Proteſtant Cauſe*, whenever that Church has Power or Opportunity to make uſe of him.

Thus by a bigotted Zeal for the *Scripture* itſelf, without the Uſe of *Reaſon*, Men are carried off to *Popery*, which it is impoſſible any Man, Woman, or *Child* could be, if they were taught to *Judge in their ownſelves what is right*; for though they could not infallibly judge of *every Truth*, they would infallibly diſcover what is ſo *very wrong*, and be preſerved from falling into that Whirlpool of Confuſion.

Now to conclude; If the Arguments that have been offered may be effectual, to rouze the latent Faculties of the Soul, born down by the Gravity of *Education*, *Tradition*, and *Authority*, defended by chimerical Fears and tremendous Horrours of imaginary Dangers, and render'd weak and languid thro' miſuſe; if they have *Weight* and *Force* enough to exert your Minds to *Cogitation* and *Reflection*, and excite you to *work out your own Redemption* with Care and Diligence from *grave Impoſitions*, and *ſolemn Slavery*, I have not labour-ed in vain, I have obtain'd the End I ſought for: That each *judging for himſelf what is right*, may be brought into *the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God*; which may be reaſonably expected to be the Reward of all that ſeek the *Truth* with *Sincerity*; which to do, that the moſt *daſtardly* and *timorous* Souls may be encouraged, to whomſoever *Truth* is their *real Aim*, the *Reward* of Truth will be their *certain End:* For *Peace* of Conſcience is the Conſequence of *Sincerity* of Mind, and *honourable Endeavours*; and ſays our Lord, *whoſoever aſketh, receiveth; he that ſeeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it ſhall be opened.*

LECTURE

LECTURE II.

GENTLEMEN,

PURSUANT to our ſetting out, we ſhall further proceed, to vindicate the Right of private Judgment, from the Words of *Jeſus Chriſt*, mention'd in *Luke* xii. 57. *Yea, and why even of your ownſelves, judge ye not that which is right?*

If we obſerve the *Context* with the *Text*, and the *Office* of Jeſus Chriſt with his *Words* and *Actions*, we may imagine him thus addreſſing himſelf to the People. You can judge of the *Weather*, make juſt Obſervations, and draw right Inferences from thence; Why don't you do the ſame of *other* Things which as nearly concern you? Don't you ſee in me the Signs of a *Meſſenger of Truth*, and why don't you make right Concluſions from what I deliver? Why don't you evidently perceive that I am the *Meſſiah*, by whom you are to be *freed*, not from the *Roman Power*, but from the *Power of Prieſts*, who rule over your *Conſciences*, from the *Yoke of Tradition* that blinds your *Underſtanding*, and from that of *Superſtition* which makes you *Fools* and *Bigots?* If you did but exerciſe the ſame *common Senſe* in Things of *Religion*, as you do in the *change of Seaſons*, and common Affairs, it would be no difficult Taſk for you to *Judge in yourſelves what is right*.

The *Power* or *Faculty* which is peculiar to Man, to judge of ſpeculative Points, is call'd his *Reaſon*. All Creatures ſeem to have a kind of *Reaſon*, ſufficient to ſupply their Wants; Mans Wants being greater than all other Creatures, his *Reaſon* is magnified in Proportion thereto. Birds, Brutes, and Inſects ſeem not to want *Reaſon* neceſſary for their well Being; but as Man has Deſires and Views beyond theſe, ſo is the Extenſion of his *Reaſon* beyond them all. As Man is by Speech and Inſtruction render'd a *ſocial* Creature, he perceives his Happineſs to conſiſt in *Society*; therefore extends his Views to larger Proſpects, than the narrow confines of his own little Being. Souls thus delighted, exert all their Powers to enlarge their *ſocial* Bliſs; the more they increaſe in *Love* to mankind, the more they endeavour to improve their *Knowledge*.

As

As nothing can be more *deſirable* to honeſt Minds than the *Knowledge of ſacred Truth*, it being productive of the greateſt Satisfaction, ſo the Means to obtain it, has always been eſteem'd the *firſt grand neceſſary Point*. TRUTH has been by the better Part of Mankind laboriouſly ſought after, and eſteemed of ineſtimable Value: But thoſe who ſeek *Riches* and *Honour* as their moſt deſirable good, have made it their Buſineſs in all Ages, as much as poſſible, to bar up an eaſy acceſs to it; declaring that alone to be the *right Way*, which is moſt conducive to their own *private Ends*. This formidable Army is the *Power* we are to attack, if no *Power* but that of *Reaſon* only interfere to decide the *Battle*, to determine the Iſſue of the *Controverſy*, to which all righteous Powers ought to ſubmit; we may ſet at Defiance all manner of *Prieſtcraft* throughout the World, nor fear obtaining the Honour of a *Victorious Triumph*. This the *Enemy* is ſenſible of, and therefore have recourſe to other unreaſonable Methods, whenever they can, which are *mean* and *barbarous*; but ſuch Methods, God be thanked, are at this Time not to be feared.

The better to underſtand, Whether all Men may or can Judge for themſelves what is Right, let us enquire,

Firſt, Whether all Men have Reaſon to Judge for themſelves?

Secondly, In what Senſe Reaſon may be ſaid to be always Right.

Thirdly, In what Senſe, and by what Means, the Reaſon of the common People is generally deprav'd, and their Judgments warp from Rectitude.

Then, draw ſome *Inferences* from the Premiſes, and ſo conclude.

Firſt then, let us examine, Whether all Men have Reaſon to judge for themſelves?

That all Men generally have ſome *Power* to *Reaſon*, or *reaſonable Faculties*, is commonly allowed, though there may be an Exception to this General Rule; *Fools* and *Madmen* muſt be excluded; the Organs of Cogitation, the Senſorium or Nerves in the Brain, in natural *Ideots*, ſeem marr'd in their make, and thoſe in *Maniacks* diſtracted by ſome accidental Violence, and ſo render'd untuneable; therefore neither of theſe belong to the general Claſs we are now to conſider of. Thoſe that are incapable of receiving Inſtruction have not Reaſon.

But there is a kind of Stupidity in ſome, that proceeds not always from an *Incapacity*, but often from a wrong Education, and *perverſe* or *ſlothful* Diſpoſition. Some are not *made* Fools by Nature, but are *render'd* ſo by the ill bent of their Affections, or by a vicious Education. They are not *indocible*, but *incorrigible*; they will not be improv'd by Art; Nature has given them Endowments, but they will not make uſe of them: Therefore they ſeem not to *poſſeſs* what they do not *Exerciſe*. The Reaſons of this brutality of Mankind, ſhall be conſider'd in their Place.

If there is not generally in Mankind, a *Capacity* of judging what is Right, Why did *Jeſus*, and

Why

Why do we, appeal to that Capacity or Power in them ſo to do?

If the *Light of common Senſe* was not come into the World, how could the Deeds of Darkneſs be condemn'd? Deeds which *ſhun* the Light, and *tremble* at Diſcovery. God has given to every Species of Creatures, Abilities fit for their well being; and can we ſuppoſe he has been *leſs* bountiful to Men; that they only ſhould be ſo *weak* and *neglected*, and left ſo *wretched*, as to need *ſupernatural Leading Strings*, which themſelves cannot procure or put on; but their *Spiritual Taylors*, who *dreſs* up their Believers *Imaginations* in what *Mode* they pleaſe, and tell them their *Wedding Garments* muſt be *cut out* each according to his *own* Faſhion, or they'll not be permitted to enter the *Bridegroom's Chamber*. To put on their *Modes of Faith and Worſhip*, they call *putting on Chriſt*; but ſome of their *Habits* are ſuch meer *Maſquerade*, that they who put them on, ſeem rather to have *put on the old Man with his Deeds*. That there is in every Man, who has a common Capacity, a Power to Judge what is Right for himſelf muſt be granted; if Man be allowed to be a *reaſonable Creature*, and the *right Exerciſe* of it is, when *Intereſt* and *Prejudice* are ſet aſide, and the Mind left free to determine what is the Truth, without any *Weight* or *Biaſs*, but that of the *Nature and Reaſon of Things*; and this Judgment of every ſuch individual will be very much improv'd, if there be join'd with it the Acids of other Minds, or the Aſſiſtance of other Mens Thoughts in the ſame *free* way of *thinking*.

Let us ſecondly, Enquire in what Senſe Reaſon may be ſaid to be always Right?

By calling Man a *reaſonable Creature*, we allow that Mankind have Reaſon, or a Power to Reaſon; a Power *perfect* in itſelf in the *ſmalleſt Degree*, and if *rightly exercis'd*, capable of directing to *neceſſary Truth*: But Mens not acting *perfectly* conformable to it, does not deſtroy the *Perfection* of its Nature. I ſay, *Reaſon is perfect in its Nature, in the ſmalleſt Degree*, as the ſmalleſt Spark is perfect Fire; ſo the Power of Reaſoning, though ever ſo weak, is true Power ſo far as it is a Power. The *one* Talent given to be Traded with, was of the ſame Nature with the *ten*, and though he who had *no more* could not have made the Improvements the others did, he might have made *ſome*: No more was required of him than the right Exerciſe of what he receiv'd. Jeſus Chriſt ſaid to the *common* and *ſuperſtitious* People, *Why judge ye not in yourſelves that which is right*, upbraiding them with not uſing their Reaſon to make a right Judgment of Things, for the Non-exerciſe of Reaſon does not *deſtroy* its Power, though it renders that Power of *no Service*. If *Reaſon* be a *Light* in its own Nature, it cannot be *Darkneſs*, though it may be *Eclips'd*. If it be not uſed as a *Light* to any Mind, that Mind is *dark*, being *void of Reaſon*; but then we ſhould not condemn *Reaſon* as the *Cauſe* of that Darkneſs. He that makes a *falſe Guide* his *Rule* inſtead of his *Reaſon*, is in a miſerable State. *If the Light that is in Man be Darkneſs, how great is that Darkneſs.*

To ſay that God has not given Man ſufficient *Power* to do his Will,

Will, yet requires it to be done, is to make God a *ſevere* and *unjuſt* Being, *reaping where he has not ſowed, and gathering where he ſtrawed not.* To ſay God has given Man a ſufficient *Power* to do his Will, and not ſufficient *Capacity* in himſelf to know what his Will is, is as abſurd and no leſs reflecting on the juſtice of God; for how can a Man do the Will of God, if he knows it not? and how can it be *juſt* in God to require what he does not give? This Capacity to know the Law of our Maker, is our *Reaſon*; which muſt therefore be *always true* in its Nature. Yet as it is human, it may be *miſuſed*, not through its own Fault, but by accidents that direct it; for if there be a *Miſtake*, *Uncertainty*, or any *want of Perſpicuity* in Matter of Fact, Reaſon is not *Eyes*, nor *Ears*, theſe may be deceived, *falſe Atteſtations*, or Accounts *credulouſly* or *raſhly received*, without an impartial Enquiry by ſuch Methods as are neceſſary to confirm the *Truth*, may miſlead the Judgment: When this happens, and *Reaſon* is exerciſed on *falſe* Repreſentations, not *Reaſon*, but thoſe *Eyes*, *Ears*, or *Relaters* are faulty. Hence if we would Reaſon aright, we ſhould beware of all falſe and precarious dreaming Stories, and pretended Viſions to palm a Belief upon us, which contradicts the common Senſe of Mankind. No Man can tell what *Form* or *Colour* Things are of, beyond the Ken of human Sight; and in like Manner, who ſo goes about to determine by *Reaſon*, what there is no Foundation for in *Senſe*, may deceive himſelf: But Reaſon is ſtill the ſame in itſelf, however exerciſed; for it always diſcovers the moral fitneſs of Facts, which are *certainly* and *clearly* tranſmitted to the Mind, as the *Eye* does *Colours*, or the *Ear Sounds.*

Indeed it muſt be granted, that though Reaſon be perfect, abſtractedly conſidered, yet ſeeing it may be *miſuſed*, Man is a *fallible* Creature, and needs Inſtruction.

And that, though all Men may be ſaid to be enlightened with a *true Light*, yet 'tis certain it ſhines but *dim* in ſome, ſo that all Men cannot be Philoſophers; ſome muſt be *hewers of Wood, and drawers of Water to the Congregation:* Nature has wiſely formed ſome for that Service. But when the Tribe of *Levi* are of this ſort, they are made holy Butchers for the Service of the Sanctuary, and make the Altar ſacred with the Blood of Lambs: *Ignorance* is made uſe of to ſlaughter *Innocence.* As the *Light of Reaſon* but *faintly* emits its Rays in ſome of the human Form, ſo that their Capacities ſeem not to exceed the Brutes, as to any Thought or Judgment beyond the common Affairs of the Life, they are exerciſed about, ſo Labour in that State of Life is all they are *fit* for, which if they perform *well* in their Stations, are certainly *good* People, proper in their Place, and ought to be valued as *uſeful* to the Common Wealth. But an incapacity of Judgment in Things morally fit, does not always ariſe from the *natural Make* of the Man, but oftimes becauſe Men do not make uſe of the *Endowments*, which God by Nature has given them.

This leads us to the *third* Thing, which is to enquire, Why

Mens Reaſons are generally depraved, and their Judgments warp from from Rectitude? I have conſidered of three grand Cauſes, tho' perhaps more may be given.

1*ſt*, If a *falſe* Foundation be laid for a *true*, the Concluſions proceeding from thence as directed by Reaſon, may be rightly drawn, yet very falſe in themſelves; becauſe founded on a falſe Hypotheſis.

If a Houſe be ever ſo well built on a ſandy Foundation by the Sea-ſide, the riſing Surges, the tempeſtuous Waves, and ſtormy Winds will lay it waſte. All we know by Reaſon is true, according to the Evidences on which it is founded; if thoſe Evidences are *clear*, the Reaſons naturally reſulting from thence will be *clear* alſo: But if the *ground Work* of thinking Creatures is *wrong* laid by Education, or Authority, and they never call thoſe *Fundamentals* in Queſtion, nor judge for themſelves different from thoſe Rules, it is no wonder if they are *wrong* all their Life-time after.

Men cannot know the Truth, that do not impartially examine what is Right or Wrong from the Foundation. Mens Reaſons ſhould look *backward* as well as *forward*; for Men are too often trained up in Error, and blinded by Tradition.

If a Man Trade on a borrowed Stock of *Faith*, which upon Examination proves a *Counterfeit*, it can be no wonder if upon making up the Balance, the *believing Trader* finds himſelf a *ſpiritual Bankrupt*.

2*dly*, If *right* Premiſes or Propoſitions are laid down, but not *clearly underſtood*, Men may by their Reaſons draw *falſe Concluſions*; thus Reaſon *wrong*, as to the *right Senſe* of the Propoſitions, though *right* as to their Apprehenſions of them: Thus Men may be *deceived*, at the ſame Time they think themſelves in the Right.

Here we are allowed to ſay, that Men may teach *falſe Doctrines out of the Scripture by miſtaking its Senſe*; for in it are *many Things hard to be underſtood* aright. 'Tis eaſy then for Men of no deep Penetration to err; and making that Error their Foundation to Reaſon from, it is called the miſtake of their Reaſon, though it be not ſo, but their miſtake of the Senſe of Scripture Words and Phraſes, which they extract their Doctrines from. The *Original* of the Scripture cannot be wrong, for where is it to be found in the World? Yet the *Tranſlation* is often found fault with, though it has been the *honeſt* Labour of very *Learned* Men.

It is no Virtue to receive any Thing implicitly or by Authority; becauſe though it may be *true*, What Aſſurance has the Believer that it is ſo? What Reward can be due to thoſe who receive all Things upon *Truſt*? for he that believes in the *true God* by the *Faith of Education* only, had he been educated an *Idolater*, would have believed in *Idols*: What then is he better who believes in *Chriſt* by Education *merely*, than he that believes in *Moſes* or *Mahomet*? For if he had been taught to believe in one of theſe, he would have been a *Jew* or *Mahometan*: Or *Joſs* of *India* would have been quite as *ſacred* a Name to him, as *Jeſus* of *Nazareth*: Nor is an implicit Believer of

of even *Truth* itſelf able to defend it; ſince he is ignorant of the Reaſons which alone can do it. Much of our Wiſdom conſiſts in *unlearning* what we have wrong *learned*; for Notions that are induſtriouſly taught for filthy Lucres ſake up and down in the World, will not bear the Teſt of *ſober* and *rational Enquiry*, and ought therefore to be rejected.

3*dly*, Another Kind of Error in Judgment proceeds from Mens *Stubbornneſs* in Opinion, *Zeal* for their own Way, which they like not to hear ſpoken againſt, or condemned by the *cleareſt* Reaſons, and this Claſs I ſhall diſtinguiſh into five Sorts.

1*ſt*, Thoſe that knowing their own *Inability* to reaſon about ſuch Principles which their Paſtors *puzzle* them with, take all they ſay for granted, give themſelves up in *blind Obedience* to all their Doctrines and Directions, and thinking them *mighty Scholars* becauſe of their *all-confounding Nonſenſe*, give into their *Syſtem* and believe all they ſay. Theſe go wherever their *Shepherd* leads them, and though not quite ſo *harmleſs*, are as *ſilly* as *Sheep*.

2*dly*, Some are willing to think themſelves in the Right becauſe they think it ſcandalous to *change* their Sentiments. This is commonly the Vice of the Antient. Shall I, ſays a *grave Senior*, grown grey with the Weight of revolving Years, *change my Sentiments*, and as it were my *Religion*, which I have been *wedded* to ſo long; and own to the World that I have lived all my Life in *Error?* Ah no! this ill becomes my *Gravity*. Old Men are commonly *inflexible*; as there is no changing *grey* Hairs to *youthful* Colour, ſo whoever has been *accuſtomed* to a Road of thinking for three or four ſcore Years, and *pleaſed* only with that Road, cannot eaſily by the moſt powerful Arguments be led out of it. He is like an *Engine of Clock-work* that is ſet a-going by Art, and muſt go by the Force of its Spring or Weight, in the ſame Manner it ever did, till the Spring or Weight be down. The way of Thinking of ſuch ſort of Men becomes an *Habit*, and powerful as *Nature* itſelf. Who would encounter ſuch a *potent* Adverſary? or who that does, can hope for *Succeſs?* which if it be poſſible to obtain, is not to be done by all the Reaſon in the World at the Times when theſe Men are fancying themſelves *moſt Devout*; for *Superſtition* and *Enthuſiaſm*, the *Pride* of *Religion*, joined with the *invincible Force* of *long Cuſtom*, bears down all before it. But at the Times, if ever there are ſuch that can be happily ſtruck in with, when the *Religious Uproar* of their Minds is *ſilent*, when they dare to *doubt* of the *Abſurdities* and *Incredibilities* of their *own* Opinions, (which are *not properly their own*, but ſuch as have been put into them), only then, they are capable of receiving Information, and ſeeing themſelves in an Error, or at leaſt of being brought to believe, that other Men poſſibly who differ from them, may be in the right in ſome Things, at leaſt ſo far as may entitle them to the Favour of God; and that no Man has a proper Claim to it for merely adhering to Principles taught when a Child; nor any Man expelled his Favour, for abdicating thoſe

Principles who perceives them erroneous; and that every Man may be permitted to *judge in himſelf what is right.*

3*dly*, Some are *careleſs* and *indifferent* whether they are *right* or *wrong*, they think it ſafeſt to be protected by *Authority*, that it is moſt pleaſing to follow the prevailing *Faſhion* of *Religion* as well as *Habit*, and cautiouſly reſolve not to ſwim againſt the Stream. Theſe if Religion does them no good, they do no hurt with it; they are religiouſly *harmleſs*, and ſo indifferent that there is no fear of their being *Sectaries*. This Claſs of Men if they deſerve no *Applauſe*, ought not to be condemned; becauſe they are to be eſteemed ſome of the beſt Members of every eſtabliſhed Church. Theſe are never *Righteous overmuch*, which is as Miſchievous as to be *over-much Wicked*. The ſame *Extreams* are equally diſtant from the *Mean* of the *Purity*, *Social Love*, and *Wiſdom* of *true Religion*. They that are *over-much Righteous* are always hurtful Creatures, to their Neighbours, Relations, or Themſelves. For when a Man with an *empty* Head has it *filled* with a *Prieſt*, he neglects the taking care of his Family, and runs up and down from one Church or Place to another, praying God to do it.

Many of thoſe that ſeem indolent in Matters of Religion, who are *indifferent* as to *Forms* of *Worſhip*, and *careleſs* in their *Credenda*, have the Powers of the Mind running in another Channel, and biaſſed by the Influence of other Views in their different Stations of Life; which if it be *laudable*, may be their Way to *Happineſs*; for though every Way to it be *ſtraight* and *difficult*, therefore requires *Induſtry*; many are the Ways that lead to it. If the Motive be *Juſt* and *Honourable*, the Purſuit muſt be *good* and *virtuous*. He that rightly exerciſes the Diſpoſitions Nature has given him, ſerves *God* and *Mankind* acceptably, as well one way as another.

4*thly*, There belong to the Claſs of thoſe that obſtinately err in Judgment, ſome who from a *Fondneſs* of being thought religious, and *glorying* in a Shew of Profeſſion, ſuck in the Notions of their *right holy Nurſes*, like Mother's Milk. The *Profeſſor* ſays, Oh what a *heavenly* Man is our Preacher! how *feelingly* he talks of the Work of the Spirit! and if he often mentions the Name of CHRIST, though perhaps to little Purpoſe, only to ſanctify a *pitiful Performance*, The *Profeſſor* cries out, Oh this is a *rare Chriſt Preacher!* A *worthy Man of God!* this being carried to the Ears of the pious Divine, and the *Teſtimony* being *ſealed* with the *Paw* of the *Golden Calf*, he avers his Diſciple is a right good Chriſtian.

Thus the Characters of each are fixed, and it is no leſs than Sacrilege to obſerve any *Flaw* in their *Judgment* or *Behaviour*. I ſay not this to encourage Cenſoriouſneſs, or Slander: But after all, his *effectual Preaching* ſo called, amounts to no more than this, the making ſome *tender Matrons* *ſigh* and *groan*, and *timorous Youths* to *cry* and *run into Deſpair*; becauſe they are taught to believe that *God* is a *very hard Maſter*; though the Preacher himſelf don't tell them how *eaſy* he finds *God's*

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Service to him, and what *feeling Joy*, what *effectual Reward*, the Work of Grace brings, when it proſpers in his *Hands*. He powerfully inculcates the Doctrines of *Free Grace* and the *New Birth* to his Hearers, and well he knows the Believer has the *true Marks*, when he *feels* them in his *Fingers*.

Hence is the Fifth and laſt Reaſon I have at preſent to give, why Men obſtinately err in Judgment.

Of this Sort are all they, who from their *Fidelity* and *Honeſty* to the *Intereſt* of *Mammon*, have no other left. That which ſuits *this*, is *Truth* to them; and what does *not* is *ſchiſmatical*, *heretical*, or whatever they pleaſe to call it. Some there be of this kind that to *monopolize* the *whole Market* to themſelves, oblige Men to pay for what they do not *want*, nor *uſe*, and would *deſpiſe* if they had the *Wares* for *nothing*. What can any Man think but that theſe *Impoſers* have no *Conſcience* at all, and therefore ought never to *talk* of it: Yet what all *Tradeſmen* and *Merchants* would laugh at; none make *greater Pretenſions* to it; their *whole Trade* being nothing elſe but to *talk* about it, and therefore deſerve not the Honour of being rank'd among *fair Dealers*.

But *from ſuch whoſe Gain is their Godlineſs, let us turn away*; *The wiſe Man's Eyes are in his Head*, ſays Solomon; his Reaſon is rightly *grounded* and *directed*, not built on *falſe Bottoms*, not drawn from *falſe Premiſes*. The wiſe Man's Rule is that divine Law of *moral Fitneſs*, which teaches what is juſt and good, which is generally more or leſs *evident*, as it is more or leſs *obſerv'd* and *obey'd*. The Good of Society, and the Felicity of Mankind, depend on their Adherence to it. This, if *rightly regarded*, is a *ſufficient Director* to make Men as *happy* as they can be; for by *Reaſon rightly exercis'd* and *improv'd*, Men know all moral and ſpeculative Truths they can know; and it has always been an effectual Means to make rational Creatures *wiſe* and *virtuous*, if they have been ſo made at all.

No more Perfection can be in any Creature than its Nature is capable of; Man's Nature is only capable of *moral* Perfection, which Reaſon teaches, for all Morality is directed by right Reaſon, 'tis the utmoſt Perfection of human Nature: Nor can there be any *greater Holineſs* found in Man or requir'd of him. If he fancy himſelf poſſeſs'd of any other, it muſt be on the *Credit* of his *Spiritual Merchant*, whoſe *Wares* being *Chimerical*, are never *vendible*, but when *uninquiſitive Chapmen* go to *Market*. Reaſon is ſaid to be *corrupted* when it is exercis'd on *wrong Subjects*, or to a *wrong End*, or *bad Purpoſes*; therefore a wiſe Man examines well if the Corner-Stone of his Building be *elect* and *precious*, and is careful that his *Aims* are ſuch, as are conducive to the *higheſt Happineſs*, and productive of the *greateſt Good* his Station is capable of to himſelf and Mankind. He conſiders well the *Cauſe*, and weighs well the *Effects*. If he *errs*, as who is wiſe at *all Times*, and in *all Reſpects*, he is acquitted of Guilt if his Intentions are juſt. As no Man is *all-knowing*, ſo no Man is *all-wiſe*; and as Man is a *mutable*, ſo every Man is a *fallible* Creature: Yet by his doing his Endeavour, and employ-

ing his *Talents* in the *beſt* Manner he can, if he ſhould not *improve* them, (which is hardly poſſible) he has *deſerv'd Succeſs*, and thereby acquitted himſelf of Guilt. He that trades in the World with *Honeſty* and *Induſtry*, but *fails*, Men will *pity*, and give him *Credit again:* Is *God* leſs juſt or merciful than *Men?* Tho' Merit be not always rewarded with *apparent Succeſs*, yet it is not for that the leſs Merit. *God who ſees not as Man ſees, but regards the Heart*, doubtleſs rewards Man's *honeſt* Endeavour with internal Peace and Tranquility.

From what has been ſaid we may infer,

1*ſt*, If the wrong Biaſs of our prevailing Paſſions or Prejudices miſlead the Judgment, and cauſe us to ſwerve from moral Rectitude, how careful ſhould we be, who make Truth our Aim, to guard againſt thoſe Adverſaries of our Bliſs which fruſtrate all our Endeavours.

If we have mental Faculties which rightly improv'd will lead us to Truth, let us make a proper Uſe of them, by thinking and reaſoning freely; let us regard this intellectual Light, and be careful to preſerve it by ſupplying our *Lamps* with *Oil*; by improving our reaſonable Faculties, with what Learning and Doctrines may preſerve their luminous Splendor, to order our Conduct aright, that we may not be found in the ſame Caſe with the *fooliſh Virgins*, whoſe *Lamps* of *Reaſon* went out through Careleſſneſs, and being involv'd in the *Darkneſs* of *Myſteries*, were ſhut out of the *Kingdom* of *Truth*.

2*dly*, Since the inadvertent Part of Mankind are the incurious Searchers after *Truth*, it is evident the Populace know it not; it is out-voted by Numbers. He that would find it muſt not herd with the Multitude, yet *Truth* affects no Singularity, but is *plain, free*, and *unaffected*.

Tho' the Throng have excluded Truth, and tho' it is the Buſineſs of many, to ſtand like *Mercuries* at the Turnings of the Highways, directing honeſt Enquirers to go that Road which moſt conduces to their *Gain*, not the Way that is moſt right; yet by thoſe that ſeek Truth in the right Way of Reaſon, directed by Nature, or by wiſe Obſervations of Nature's Rules, and biaſs'd by no other Paſſion than the *ſincere Love* of it, it may be found *plain* Underſtanding, and *irreſiſtibly convincing* to the Judgment.

3*dly*, Let them that would find Truth, beware of the Miniſters of *Mammon*; who ever comes to Truth muſt be careful of *their* Road, muſt cautiouſly doubt and examine what is impos'd on them by *their* Authority.

4*thly*, If there are ſo many Ways of Deception into which the Vulgar run, how wary ſhould we be to avoid all theſe dangerous Rocks and unheeded Quick-ſands, and *ſtrive to enter in at the ſtrait Gate* of Wiſdom, or Truth, for *few there be that find it*.

For what Men generally call *Truths*, are *their own* Sentiments of Things. Theſe are as different as their *Educations*, and depend thereon; but *Truth muſt be founded on the Reaſon and Nature of the Things themſelves, or there is no*

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Foundation in Nature for Truth. He that knows the Voice of Truth will not follow the Voice of a Stranger. The *Stranger* utters *incomprehenſible* Myſteries, pretended *ſecret* Decrees, his Oracles hold forth *unintelligible Enigma's*, roaring with *anathematizing Bulls*, and terrible Thunders in *Fire* and *Smoke*, an excellent Emblem of *dark Zeal.*

But the Voice of *Truth by Nature* is *plain* and *eaſy*, *ſoft* and *entrancing*, *ſweet* and *alluring*, *wiſe* and *informing* the *Head*, *virtuous* and *reforming* the *Heart*, *Glory* is in her *right* Hand, and *Peace* is in her *left*: It is that *Wiſdom which is better than Rubies or fine Gold, and all the Things Men can deſire are not to be compared with it.*

Did Men *really know*, that the *only* Thing neceſſary to be known with regard to *God* and *Religion* is principally that of *their Duty to each other, in their different Stations of Life*, they would not be ſo eaſily deceiv'd, and terrified from exerciſing their reaſonable Faculties by *damnation Doctrines about Faith*; they would be more *wiſe* and *honeſt*, and enjoy Life with more *Pleaſure and Freedom*; but then the *Pride*, the *Power*, and the *Profit* of *myſterious aſſuming* and *dictating Prieſts* and *Preachers* would be laid *low*; their *Pageantry* and *Superſtitions* would be brought *down*; Men would have the higheſt Veneration for *Wiſdom* and *Truth*, *Honeſty* and *plain Dealing*; they would not ſwallow down the *miſchievous Principles* they do, and with ſuch *fiery Zeal* contend for them; but *ſocial Virtue*, and *harmonious Love*, the very *Soul* of Religion, would *ſhine* thro' all our *Actions*, and tranſlate this World into Paradice.

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THE

HISTORY

AND

CHARACTER

OF

St. *PAUL*, Examined:

IN A

Letter to THEOPHILUS, a Chriſtian Friend.

Occaſioned by Obſervations on the Converſion and Apoſtleſhip of St. PAUL: In a Letter to GILBERT WEST, Eſq;

With a PREFACE by Way of *POSTSCRIPT.*

It is not good to have Reſpect of Perſons in Judgment.
Prov. xxiv. 33.

Antehac non ſoleo multum tribuere fabulis, quæ vulgò feruntur; ſed poſthac multò minus tribuam: ſuſpicor enim ab hominibus credulis multa pro veris prodita literis. ERASMUS.

LONDON:

Printed for and Sold by F. PAGE, near St. *Paul's.*

The Hiſtorians Account of PAUL.

Acts ix.

1. AND *Saul* yet breathing out threatenings and ſlaughter againſt the diſciples of the Lord, went unto the high prieſt.

2. And deſired of him letters to *Damaſcus* to the ſynagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto *Jeruſalem*.

3. And as he journied he came near *Damaſcus*, and ſuddenly there ſhined round about *him* a light from heaven.

PAUL's *Account before the* Roman *chief Captain and the People at* Jeruſalem.

Acts xxii.

3. I Am verily a man which am a *Jew*, born in *Tarſus*, in *Cilicia*, yet brought up in this City, at the Feet of *Gamaliel*, and taught according to the perfect Manner of the Law of the Fathers, and was zealous towards God, as ye all are at this day.

4. And I perſecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into priſons both men and women.

5. As alſo the high prieſt doth bear me witneſs, and all the eſtate of the elders: from whom alſo I received letters unto the brethren, and went to *Damaſcus*, to bring themwhich were there bound unto *Jeruſalem*, for to be puniſhed.

6. And it came to paſs, that as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto *Damaſcus*, about noon ſuddenly there ſhone from heaven a great light round about *me*.

PAUL's *Account before* Agrippa Feſtus, *and principal Men at* Ceſarea.

Acts xxvi.

9. I Verily thought with my ſelf, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of *Jeſus* of *Nazareth*.

10. Which thing I alſo did in *Jeruſalem*: and many of the ſaints did I ſhut up in priſon, having received authority from the chief prieſt; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice againſt them.

11. And I puniſhed them oft in every ſynagogue, and compelled them toblaſpheme, and being exceedingly mad againſt them, I perſecuted them even unto ſtrange cities.

12. Whereupon as I went to *Damaſcus* with authority and commiſſion from the chief prieſts.

13. At mid-day, O king, I ſaw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightneſs of the ſun, ſhining round about *me, and them that journeyed with me*.

4. And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice ſaying unto him, *Saul, Saul,* why perſecuteſt thou me?

5. And he ſaid, who art thou, Lord? and the Lord ſaid, I am *Jeſus* whom thou perſecuteſt: it is hard for thee to kick againſt the pricks.

6. And he trembling and aſtoniſhed, ſaid, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? and the Lord ſaid unto him, ariſe, and go into the city, and it ſhall be told thee what thou muſt do.

7. And *the men* that journeyed with him *ſtood* ſpeechleſs, *hearing a voice,* but *ſeeing no man.*

7. And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice ſaying unto me, *Saul, Saul,* why perſecuteſt thou me?

8. And I anſwered, who art thou, Lord? and he ſaid unto me, I am *Jeſus* of *Nazareth,* whom thou perſecuteſt.

10. And I ſaid what ſhall I do, Lord? and the Lord ſaid unto me, ariſe and go into *Damaſcus,* and there it ſhall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.

9. And they that were with me, ſaw indeed the light, and were afraid, but *they heard not the voice* of him that ſpake to me.

14. And when *we were all fallen to the earth,* I heard a voice ſpeaking unto me, and ſaying in the *Hebrew* tongue, *Saul, Saul,* why perſecuteſt thou me? it is hard for thee to kick againſt the pricks.

15. And I ſaid, who art thou, Lord? and he ſaid, I am *Jeſus* whom thou perſecuteſt

16. But riſe, and ſtand upon thy feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this purpoſe, to make thee a miniſter, and a witneſs, both of theſe things which thou haſt ſeen, and of thoſe things in the which I will appear unto thee.

17. Delivering thee from the people, and from the *Gentiles,* unto whom now I ſend thee.

18. To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveneſs of ſins, and inheritance among them which are ſanctified, by faith that is in me.

19. Whereupon, O king *Agrippa,* I was not diſobedient unto the heavenly viſion.

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8. And *Saul* aroſe from the earth; and when his eyes were opened *he ſaw no man:* but they *led him by the hand*, and brought him into *Damaſcus*.

11. And when I could not ſee for the glory of that light, being *led by the hand* of them that were with me, I came into *Damaſcus*.

9. And he was three days without ſight, and did neither eat nor drink.

10. And there was a certain diſciple at *Damaſcus*, named *Ananias*, and to him ſaid the Lord in a viſion, *Ananias*, and he ſaid, behold I am here Lord.

11. And the Lord ſaid unto him, Ariſe, and go into the ſtreet, which is called *Strait*, and enquire in the houſe of *Judas*, for one called *Saul* of *Tarſus*: for behold he prayeth.

12. And hath ſeen in a viſion a man named *Ananias*, coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his ſight.

13. Then *Ananias* anſwered, Lord, I have heard of many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy ſaints at *Jeruſalem*.

14. And here he hath authority from the chief prieſts to bind all that call on thy name.

15. But the Lord ſaid unto him go thy way: for he is a choſen veſſel unto me, to bear my Name before the *Gentiles*, and Kings and the children of *Iſrael*.

16. For I will ſhew him how great things he muſt ſuffer for my name ſake.

17. And *Ananias* went his way, and entered into the houſe; and putting his hands on him, ſaid, Brother *Saul*, the Lord, (even *Jeſus* that appeared unto thee in the way as thou cameſt) hath ſent me that thou mighteſt receive thy ſight, and be filled with the holy ghoſt.

18 And immediately there fell from his eyes, as it had been ſcales; and he received ſight forthwith, and he aroſe and was baptized.

12. And one *Ananias* a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the *Jews*, that dwelt there.

13. Came unto me, and ſtood, and ſaid unto me, brother *Saul* receive thy ſight. And the ſame hour I looked upon him.

14. And he ſaid the God of our fathers hath choſen thee, that thou ſhouldeſt know his will, and ſee that juſt one, and ſhouldeſt hear the voice of his mouth.

19. And when he had received meat, he was ſtrengthened. Then was *Saul* certain days with the diſciples which were at *Damaſcus*.

20. And ſtraightway he preached Chriſt in the ſynagogues, that he is the Son of God.

21. But all that heard him were amazed, and ſaid, is not this he which deſtroyed them that called on this name in *Jeruſalem*, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief prieſts?

22. But *Saul* increaſed the more in ſtrength, and confounded the *Jews* which dwelt at *Damaſcus*, proving that this is very Chriſt.

23. And after that many days were fulfilled, the *Jews* took counſel to kill him.

24. But their laying in wait was known of *Saul*, and they watched the gates day and night to kill him.

25. Then the diſciples took him by night and let him down by the wall in a baſket.

26. And when *Saul* was come to *Jeruſalem*, he aſſayed to join himſelf to the diſciples,

15. For thou ſhalt be his witneſs unto all men, of what thou haſt ſeen and heard.

16. And now why tarrieſt thou? ariſe and be baptized, and waſh away thy ſins, calling on the name of the Lord.

20. But ſhewed firſt unto them at *Damaſcus*, and at *Jeruſalem*, and thro' out all the coaſts of *Judea*, and then to the *Gentiles*, that they ſhould repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

17. And it came to paſs, that when I was come again to *Jeruſalem*, even while I

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ples, but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a diſciple.

27. But *Barnabas* took him, and brought him to the apoſtles, and declared unto them, how he had ſeen the Lord in the way, and that he had ſpoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at *Damaſcus*, in the name of *Jeſus*.

28. And he was with them coming in and going out at *Jeruſalem*.

29. And he ſpake boldly in the name of the Lord *Jeſus*, and diſputed againſt the *Grecians*; but they went about to ſlay him.

30. Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to *Ceſarea*, and ſent him forth to *Tarſus*.

31. Then had the churches reſt, *&c.*

prayed in the temple, I was in a trance.

18. And ſaw him ſaying unto me, make haſte, and get thee quickly out of *Jeruſalem*, for they will not receive thy teſtimony concerning me.

19. And I ſaid Lord, they know that I impriſoned and beat in every ſynagogue them that believed on thee.

20. And when the blood of thy martyr *Stephen* was ſhed, I alſo was ſtanding by and conſenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that ſlew him.

21. And he ſaid unto me, depart, for I will ſend thee far hence unto the *Gentiles*.

21. For theſe cauſes the *Jews* caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me.

22. Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witneſſing both to ſmall and great, ſaying none other things than thoſe which the prophets, and *Moſes* did ſay ſhould come.

23. That Chriſt ſhould ſuffer, and that he ſhould be the firſt that ſhould riſe from the dead, and ſhould ſhew light unto the people and to the *Gentiles*.

BOOKS written by the ſame Author.

1. *The Reſurrection of* JESUS *conſidered*, in anſwer to *The Trial of the Witneſſes.*
2. *The Reſurrection reconſidered*, in anſwer principally to *The Reſurrection cleared.*
3. *The Reſurrection-Defenders ſtript of all Defence*, in anſwer to Mr. *Jackſon*, Mr. *Sylveſter*, Mr. *Chandler*, and the *Clearer.*
4. *Supernaturals Examined*; containing, 1. An Anſwer to the *Obſervations of the Evidence of the Reſurrection of* JESUS by *Gilbert Weſt*, Eſq. 2. An Anſwer to Mr. *Jackſon* on Miracles and Prophecies, ſhewing the Impoſſibility of the one, and the Falſhood of the other. 3. An Anſwer to *A Defence of the peculiar Inſtitutions and Doctrines of Chriſtianity* againſt *Deiſm*, *fairly ſtated and fully vindicated.*

AN

AN

EXAMINATION, &c.

I. *To* Theophilus, *of Friendſhip and Examination.*

I Know very well that Difference in Opinion makes no Difference with you, *Theophilus*, in Friendſhip; and therefore the Diſagreement of our *Sentiments* in any reſpect, that has no Relation to our moral Conduct, will never break through thoſe ſacred Bounds; we having reſolved it ſhall be an invincible Maxim with us, that nothing ſhall deſtroy our Amity but Knavery; concluding, that true Friendſhip is founded in natural Affection and moral Virtue.

The mighty Performance, *Theophilus*, you recommended to my Peruſal, and deſired my Opinion concerning, which hath indeed that Subtilty and Art that are needful to the Subject, I have conſidered; and now communicate my Thoughts on it to you, and to thoſe that are diſpoſed to examine carefully into Things. Superficial Views often deceive the Judgment. Truth ſeldom runs like Water after a Shower upon the Surface, or in the open Channels, but is like a Spring at the Bottom of a deep Well, and he muſt labour that will draw it up. The Paſſions of Men hurry them on with Impatience, that they neither take Time nor Pains ſufficient to inſpect and attend to the intrinſic Truth of Things; their Minds being eagerly employed in ſhifting Scenes, they take up with a tranſient View, and ſeldom make thoſe wiſe Obſervations that are neceſſary to come at Wiſdom and Truth.

II. *On the introductory Part of the Obſervations on St.* Paul.

In * my Contemplations on this Subject, O! *Theophilus*, I am ſurpriſed that any reaſoning Chriſtian can pretend to draw Proofs for his Religion from *Prophecies of the Old Teſtament*; ſince very few, if any, can be literally applied; and I am no leſs ſurpriſed, that it ſhould be preſumed to have any *neceſſary Connection with the Jewiſh Syſtem of Religion*, which St. *Paul* ſets up Chriſtianity to pull down; and abrogates the *Jewiſh, as well as the Pagan*. 'Tis alſo ſtrange it ſhould be conceived that *Proofs* can be drawn from *the Miracles of Chriſt* †, ſeeing the Evangeliſts themſelves

* Obſ. p. 1.

† Mat. xii. 38. xvi. 1.

themſelves bewray this Information to us, * that the *Jews* were not convinced of any Miracles done by him; and that *the Evidence of his Reſurrection* has upon the ſtricteſt Examination appeared by invincible Proof inſufficient to convince any impartial Enquirer. † Theſe Things induce me to ſearch, whether *the Converſion and Apoſtleſhip of St.* Paul *alone, duly conſidered, is a Demonſtration ſufficient to prove Chriſtianity to be a Divine Revelation*; becauſe if ſo, this Proof is independent of that.

III. *The* Acts *and* Paul's *Epiſtles antiently rejected.*

The honourable Vindicator of this Apoſtle ſays, ‡ *The Authenticity of St.* Paul's *Writings cannot be doubted, without overturning all Rules, by which the Authority and Genuineneſs of any Writings can be proved, and confirmed.* But how does the Truth of this Aſſertion appear? Have they not been a Matter of Doubt to many? Have not the Genuineneſs of ſeveral of what are now called St. *Paul's Epiſtles* been doubted of by whole Churches of Chriſtians themſelves? And if any ſhould do the ſame now, *what Rules do they overturn by which the Authority and Genuineneſs of any other Writings can be proved or confirmed?* The *Manicheans*, once no inconſiderable Sect of Chriſtians, rejected as ſpurious our whole New Teſtament, and ſhewed other Scriptures. *The Acts of the Apoſtles* was denied by the *Corinthians* and *Marcionites*. Not only *the Acts* were rejected by the *Encratites* and *Severians*, but all *Paul's Epiſtles*. St. *Chryſoſtom*, in a Homily he made on the Title of *the Acts*, ſays, "That in his Time "(which was the End of the "fourth Century) not only the "Author and Collector, but the "Book it ſelf, was unknown to "many." The *Valentinians* and many ancient Sects of Chriſtians accuſed our Scriptures of *Error* and *Imperfection*, of *Contradiction* and *Inſufficiency without Tradition*, as we are informed by *Irenæus*. The *Ebionites* or *Nazarenes*, who were the firſt Chriſtians, rejected all *Paul's Epiſtles*, as thoſe of an Enemy and an Impoſtor, as ſay *Origen* and *Euſebius*.

IV. *Of the Credibility of the Heretics and Orthodox.*

If it be objected, that the Authority of *Heretics* is of no Validity. I anſwer, with me 'tis equal to that of the *Orthodox*; for every Sect were ever Heretics to one another. What Credit can be given to the *Orthodox*, when they report Falſhoods one after another, as if it were for Company's Sake, and then their different Writings are produced for Proof to one another of what they ſay. So this notorious Falſity is aſſerted by the *Orthodox*, that Celſus *allowed of the Miracles of Chriſt*, becauſe they have been taught to ſay ſo, they proceed (either without or againſt Conviction) to aſſert after one another what the firſt falſely ſaid. In *other Caſes* this would argue the greateſt

* John ii. 18.

† See the Reſurrection of Jeſus conſidered, the Reſurrection re-conſidered, and the Reſurrection Defenders ſtripped of all Defence.

‡ Obſ. p. 7.

greateſt *Partiality* in the World, and overturn *all thoſe Rules, by which* the want of *the Genuineneſs of Writings can be examined* and detected. It follows then, that becauſe either Side has atteſted or rejected any Thing, 'tis no Argument with me that it is true or falſe, on their Authority or the want of it. Where is Oppoſition to be ſought for but among thoſe of a different Party? And till it can be proved that one are given to lying more than another, their Evidence will be eſteemed alike credible. If the Authority of *Heretics* is of no Account, it is becauſe they want Power. And 'tis the having Power gives Authority to the *Orthodox*. What then can be depended on for Truth from any Party among them? Certainly an impartial Man cannot expect it more on one Side than another: Therefore the Evidence of one Party is equal to the Evidence of another with him that is of neither; which ſufficiently deſtroys all Authority of Chriſtian Tradition, and leaves us to the Guidance of Reaſon only; eſpecially if we farther conſider, that thoſe Writings now eſteemed Apocryphal have been received as true by ſome Chriſtian Sects; and thoſe that we eſteem true, have been deemed Apocryphal. And in ancient Churches the true and ſpurious have been read together; ſo that originally they may have been alike authentic, for aught any one now living can determine to the contrary; For the ſame Authority has been attributed to the Spurious as to the Genuine, by one Church or another *.

With what Juſtice then can it be affirmed, that *the Authenticity of St.* Paul's *Writings cannot be doubted without overturning all Rules, by which the Authority and Genuineneſs of any Writings can be proved and confirmed*, when their own Inconſiſtencies, Contradictions, and Abſurdities, to thoſe that carefully ſearch, will be found to be their own Refutation. Nothing is more neceſſary than poſitive Aſſertion where plain Proof is wanting; but nothing looks worſe in a Diſputant. The greateſt Adverſary to Truth is uſurped Authority; and this is to all my Adverſaries their beſt Defence: Without theſe Pretenſions they can do nothing; and with it they can do nothing that is right.

V. *The Teſtimony of ancient Chriſtian's concerning* Paul *and the Scriptures.*

The Acts of the Apoſtles which the *Ebionites* or *Nazarenes* had recorded among other Things, that 'Paul was originally a Hea-
'then, that he came to *Jeruſa-*
'*lem*, ſtaid there for ſome Time,
'and had a Mind to marry the
'High Prieſt's Daughter, on the
'Account of which he became a
'*Proſelyte*, and was circumciſed;
'but that afterwards, not ob-
'taining the young Woman he
'was angry, and wrote againſt
'Circumciſion, againſt the Sab-

* The *Roman* Church allow that all the *Greek* Copies that now are, are baſely corrupted, and therefore pretend that their vulgar *Latin* is the only True. See the Preface to the Rhemiſh Teſtament.

'bath, and againſt keeping the 'Law.' You have been already informed, *Theophilus*, that the *Nazarenes* were the firſt common Name for Chriſtians; *Paul* you know is called the Ring-leader of the Sect of the *Nazarenes*; and *Epiphanius*, who informs us with what I laſt quoted, ſays, that the Chriſtians took this Name to themſelves from *Jeſus* of *Nazareth*. The Name of *Ebionites*, or *Beggars*, was given them by their Enemies, by way of Contempt. And we are told, that *the Diſciples were firſt called Chriſtians at* Antioch. If Authority is to be fetched from Antiquity, this I ſuppoſe of *Epiphanius* has as good a Claim to it as any Chriſtian Tradition.

* One *Fauſtus*, a *Manichean*, writes concerning the Goſpels, 'that they were wrote a long 'Time after the Apoſtles by *cer-* '*tain obſcure Perſons*, who, leſt 'no Credit ſhould be given to 'the Stories they told, of what 'they *could* not know, prefixed 'to their Writings the Names of 'the Apoſtles, which are ſo full 'of *miſtakes*, of *contradictory Re-* '*lations* and Opinions, that they 'are neither coherent with them-'ſelves, nor conſiſtent with one 'another *.' And a little after he accuſes his Adverſaries whom *Power had made Orthodox* thus, 'Many Things were foiſted by 'your Anceſtors into the Scrip-'tures of our Lord, which, tho' 'marked with his Name, agree 'not with his Faith. And no 'Wonder ſince *we have frequently* '*proved* theſe Things were neither 'written by Himſelf, nor his 'Apoſtles; but ſeveral Matters 'after their Deceaſe were picked 'up from Stories and flying Re-'ports, by I know not what Set 'of half Jews, and theſe not a-'greeing among themſelves, who 'nevertheleſs publiſhing them 'under the Names of the Apo-'ſtles of our Lord, or of thoſe 'that ſucceeded them, have 'feigned their own Lies and Er-'rors to be written according to 'them.' † *Celſus* exclaims againſt the too great Liberty which the Chriſtians took, as if they were drunk, of altering their original Goſpel ſeveral times, that ſo they might retract and deny thoſe Matters which had been urged againſt them.

VI. *Of the Fathers of the Church.*

All the Authority we can have of the Authenticity of the Chriſtian Traditions is from the Fathers; and of their underſtanding it is certain, they judged of what was right or wrong, as it ſuited with, or was oppoſite to their Party; 'each eſpouſing thoſe 'Scriptures as canonical, in 'which their peculiar Tenets 'were to be found; the reſt they 'termed Apocryphal, or Deutro-'canonical.' As for the Teſtimony of the Fathers, 'all know, 'who are ever ſo little acquain-'ted with their Writings, that 'they are not to be credited in 'the Relation, ſcarce of any one 'ſingle Matter of Fact, for the 'many Negligences, Impertinences and Falſhoods that are 'found in them; eat up as they 'were with the groſſeſt Superſti-'tions.'——*Papias*, the Tutor of *Irenæus*,

* Auguſtin contra Fauſt. l. 32, 33.

† Origen contra Celſus, l. 2.

Irenæus, was (as *Euſebius* ſays) a Man of *weak Judgment* and a *fabulous Author*, and one who led many into Error, and particularly his Pupil *Irenæus a ſimple and credulous Man*, who is the firſt *Eccleſiaſtical Writer* of Note. No wonder the Followers of an erroneous Guide are led into Errors.

To be particular about the Fathers, their Ambition, Inſolence, Avarice, Ignorance, Faction, Sedition, Perſecution of each other, Cruelty, Murders, Lies and Forgeries, and other flagrant Vices would be endleſs; yet theſe are the Men whoſe Honeſty we are to depend upon for conveying to us *the Oracles of Truth* *. 'Are we 'to learn our Religion from thoſe 'who wanted Charity? Or our 'Charity and Meekneſs? From 'Men who were perpetually 'quarrelling with and curſing 'each other? No People upon 'Earth ever differed more, nor 'proceeded with greater Fury 'and Bitterneſs in their Differences. They were conſtantly 'quarrelling about the ſmalleſt 'as well as the greateſt Points; 'and for the ſmalleſt as well as the 'greateſt they damned one another.—Does their fainting Villains and Aſſaſſins, as ſometimes they did, entitle them to 'the Character and Reverence of 'Saints? Does their eternal Contention and Contradiction qualify them for the Center of Unity? Is their turbulent Spirit and 'their wild want of common 'Senſe their ravenous Avarice and 'flaming Ambition, their Fury 'and Fighting, their frequent 'change of Opinion, their Apoſtacy and Murders; are all theſe, 'or any of them proper Guides 'of God's People? And that 'theſe Marks belong to many of 'the Fathers, and all of them to 'ſome, is too manifeſt.' Another Author † obſerves, that 'the 'Fathers too, in almoſt all Traditions, follow one another, like 'ſo many Geeſe in a Train, having neither the Honeſty nor Abilities to look carefully into 'Things, or to conſider the Nature of that Evidence by which 'only they ought to have been 'governed in relation to ſacred 'Things.'———'In a Word, a 'Man might fill Volumes with 'the bare Recital only, and that 'from the very beſt Authorities, 'of the Impieties and ſenſeleſs 'Vanities of the Fathers; but 'indeed Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory has 'done it already to our Hands, 'being itſelf but a Compendium 'of their Vices.'——Elſewhere the ſame Author reaſons thus, 'Though 'tis fit we ſhould give 'our Aſſent ſometimes to Truths, 'upon the bare Teſtimony of 'others, yet this Aſſent will be 'ſtronger or weaker as the Teſtimony is more or leſs reaſonable.——Teſtimony, before it 'can become the Object of a 'reaſonable Aſſent, muſt be attended with theſe two Circumſtances, Credibility of *Perſons*, 'and Credibility of *Things*; for 'by theſe we are to judge of all 'Hiſtory. For Inſtance, if what 'is related as fact, be agreeable 'to Reaſon and Experience, and 'we know the Relators to be 'Men of good Senſe and grea

* Gordon.

† Evans.

'Fidelity, then we have the 'higheſt external Evidence of the 'Truth. But if we have the 'Relation of a Fact ſuppoſed to 'have been done hundreds of 'Years before our Time, and 'cannot come at the Characters 'of the firſt Relators, the Evi-'dence is very much decreaſed; 'but if the Characters of the in-'termediate Relators are well 'known, and we have Reaſon to 'believe from their Compoſi-'tions, or otherwiſe, that they 'were both *weak and Enthuſiaſ-'tical, ſelf-intereſted and deſigning 'Knaves, eaſily impoſed on them-'ſelves, and diſpoſed to deceive o-'thers*, then the Relation de-'ſerves no Credit. And ſuch a 'ſet of Men I take the Fathers, 'or Heads of Parties to have 'been, almoſt to a Man, during 'the four firſt Centuries, and 'ſome Time after, injudicious 'in all they relate, taken up 'with every idle Report, un-'faithful, ignorant of true Re-'ligion, Bigots, knaviſh in all 'favourite Points of Divinity, 'ſilly Reaſoners, Betrayers of 'true Chriſtianity, Platoniſts. 'This all Men ſee, or may ſee, 'if they will acquaint themſelves 'with their Writings; and that 'inſtead of eſtabliſhing holy 'Scripture with their Teſtimo-'nies, they have rendered it 'the moſt precarious Thing in 'the World.' Therefore the Truth of ſacred Writings muſt be ſought for by their own *internal Evidence*.

VII. *Of the Authenticity of the Chriſtian Tradition, and of* Robinſon Cruſoe.

They that can take for granted that the Books of the New Teſtament muſt needs have been genuine, and could not poſſibly be corrupted, may as well take for granted, that *Tranſubſtantiation* and *Forgiveneſs of Sins by a Prieſt*, muſt have been a Doctrine originally from Heaven, and could not poſſibly otherwiſe be received in the Church; becauſe we cannot fix the preciſe Time, and Manner, when, where, and how the Impoſitions begun, and were carried on. The Church who has a piercing Eye to her own Advantage, taking what Care ſhe could to conceal thoſe Things.

Before *Printing* was found out and practiſed, it was much more eaſy to impoſe on the World than now; notwithſtanding which, many new Falſhoods are invented, and paſs for Truth, at leaſt with *a Party*; for there is a Willingneſs in partial Men to believe whatever tends to promote their Sect or Faction *.

'Tis

* The holy *Roman* Church knew, that when her holy Secrets came to be public, they would be deſpiſed as not able to ſtand a rational Scrutiny. And therefore though ſhe could not prevent what has happened, ſhe ever has, and yet does take all poſſible Care, how, where, when, and to whom the Privilege of reading the Scriptures is allowed, for nothing vexes the old Lady more, than that her ſecret Debaucheries be publicly talked of by thoſe that have examined her Facts; for by her Lies and Impoſitions ſhe has debauched the common Senſe of Mankind. She never permitted the Scriptures to be read in the common Tongue, by Perſons of common Underſtanding, but only by ſuch

'Tis confeſſed by Mr. *Dodwell*, that the Books of the New Teſtament did not *publicly* exiſt 'till at leaſt *one hundred Years* after Chriſt. And if they had no public Exiſtence 'till then, how can it be proved they had any *private* one before. And afterwards they were to be found only in the Hands of Eccleſiaſtics, 'till the *third* or *fourth* Century, Men who were more ſubtil than ſimple; more romantic Inventors than righteous Enquirers; and they that were ſimple, were more credulous than wiſe. Here was Time enough for the Work of Fraud and Impoſture. And when Chriſtians came to be inveſted with Power by *Conſtantine*, they eſtabliſhed what they thought fit.

What Authority have we, *Theophilus*, for the Truth of the Scriptures, but the Scriptures themſelves? Can any Hiſtory prove itſelf? Were not the Chriſtian Writers in the early Ages of Chriſtianity notorious for Lies and Forgeries? For fathering ſpurious Pieces on *Jeſus Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles*, and Succeſſors? Have not latter Chriſtians thrown out a Multitude of Books for Apocryphal, which the earlieſt Chriſtians believed and read in their Churches? There is a fine Catalogue of them in *Toland*'s *Amyntor*. Among the Books anciently received by Chriſtians, ſome are as fooliſh as others are romantic, *viz.* *The Paſtor of* Hermas, *the Goſpel of the Infancy of Jeſus*, *The Goſpel of* Nicodemus, to which may be added, the unintelligible *Revelations* of ſome Saints, particularly that fathered on St. J—— the D—— may be compared for Truth, but not for Wit, with *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, or *Don Quevedo's Viſions of Hell.* If Believers in the Infancy of Chriſtianity believed ſuch Romance, what Reaſon have we to believe *them*, if Reaſon ſhould guide us? If Reaſon is *not* to be our Guide, how came we to be wiſer than they? Or how can we know in what Reſpects they were right, when they were wrong in ſo many?

If ſuch Authority is wanting to the *Goſpels* themſelves, as ought to be given to eſtabliſh *their* Veracity unqueſtionable, as certainly it is; I cannot ſee how St. *Paul*'s *Epiſtles* can be more authentic than *thoſe*, unleſs *the Servant is above his Lord:* Therefore the Chriſtian Tradition is the leaſt of all Hiſtories to be

ſuch faithful Sons as ſhe can confide in, ſuch as are fit to carry on her Cheat, or by ſome devout religious Perſons, with Reverence, Secrecy and Silence, ſuch as, if I may be allowed to ſpeak in the *Mahometan* Phraſe, have had their Senſes raviſhed away by the Holy Ghoſt; or in St. *Paul*'s, by ſuch as know not whether they are in the Body-natural, or out of it, but know themſelves to be in the Body-ſpiritual; that is, in the Body of the Church, ſuch as have expreſs Licence to read the Scriptures by their Prieſts and Confeſſors, that are humble enough to be ſtupid, devout Dunghill Souls that preſume not to be wiſe above what is permitted; never preſuming to contend, controul, or talk of their own Senſe of Scripture, or have any, having laid it all down at the Threſhold of the holy Church. The Scripture being, as St. *Ambroſe* calls it, *Liber ſacerdotalis*, the Book of Prieſts. It is the Church's Tree of Knowledge, that is by a *Romiſh* Interdiction not to be touched in common, on Pain of Death and Damnation.

regarded for genuine and uncorrupted Truth.

It is no wonder if this *honourable Author*, who is an elegant Writer and ſubtil Reaſoner, but a *ſuperficial* Enquirer, could gloſs over St. *Paul* in ſo ſhining a Manner, who was ſo famed an Apoſtle, that the reſt are confeſſed to be all Blockheads and Fools to him. The Men I contend with are Men of Parts and learning, I ſcorn to attack a Fool; but it is not my Learning or Parts that gives me the Victory, but the *Truth* appears ſo evidently on *my Side*, that it requires little of either in me to diſplay and vindicate it. 'Tis no wonder if theſe Gentlemen can defend what *Cuſtom* has eſtabliſhed, when even I taught by them, and therefore a Novice to theſe Maſters of Art, can give ſuch Reaſons to prove *Robinſon Cruſoe* a *true Hiſtory*, as they themſelves, by their own Arguments, might not be able to diſprove, if they did not know it to be otherwiſe.

The Reaſons that may be given to render *Robinſon Cruſoe* a true Hiſtory are theſe, the *Writer* appears to be neither an *Impoſtor* nor an *Enthuſiaſt* from any Part of the Story; and to have had no Deſign to pervert the Reaſon of Mankind, or impoſe on Men's Underſtandings; or to *propagate a new Religion* in the World, in order to make himſelf *Head of a Sect*. It contains no *Contradictions* or *Abſurdities*; nothing *impoſſible*, *improbable* or romantic; when, where, by whom, or in what Language it was firſt written, is better known than the Books of the New Teſtament. The Genuineneſs and Authority of it was never queſtioned, nor denied. No Book was ever wrote to *diſprove* it, tho' this Hiſtory came forth at a Time when every Thing that has but the leaſt Appearance of Falſhood is oppoſed. It did not firſt appear *ſcarce* and hard to be found, nor keep an Age or two in *hugger-mugger*; nor come forth by Degrees in a few written Copies, but ſeveral hundred of printed Copies were brought forth at once from the Original. It contains nothing but what tends to the Benefit of Virtue and Religion; and the Reality of the Hiſtory is believed by many. Laſtly, if any Party of Men could find their Account in eſpouſing it as Truth and Fact, it may grow into Authority *two or three hundred* Years hence. Thus by a ſuperficial Knowledge of Things, and taking them upon Truſt, what may not be plauſible and credible to thoſe that are more inclined to believe than examine?

VIII. *That the intrinſic Nature of Chriſtian Writings beſt ſhew their Original.*

If there be no Rule in the Nature of the Thing, for judging what Writings ought to be received or rejected, then an *implicit Faith in the Authority of Tradition*, is the Rule and Foundation of the Chriſtian Religion. And ſince there is ſcarce a darker in the World, how does the Genuineneſs and Authenticity of thoſe Writings appear? Therefore proving Facts by the Book, which muſt be taken for granted to be true, do not prove the Truth of thoſe Facts, no more than they prove the Truth of the Doctrines therein contained, if there are Circumſtances of Suſpicion in one, or

Reaſon

Reaſon is againſt the other, however the one may be ſet forth, or the other defended.

I have ſhewn, *Theophilus*, that there have been thoſe who certainly were more capable of knowing the Original of theſe Books, than any Man *now* can be who have accuſed the whole of *Falſification*; tho' we have been robbed of their Proofs, they have left us juſt Suſpicions for doubting. And if the whole be ſuſpected, how can it prove the Truth of its Parts? or if ſome Parts are proved erroneous, what Dependence can be on the reſt? No doubt but if the whole be true, every Part is; but that being the Point in Queſtion cannot be its own Proof. I make no doubt of proving Part to be wrong, if *Inconſiſtencies, Contradictions and Abſurdities* can prove it; which will be ſufficient to demonſtrate that it is not to be *all* taken for granted; and that therefore all Reaſoning from ſuch falſe Foundation, muſt be falſe of conſequence. I think it is our *Duty* to ſearch after, diſcover and receive the Truth; unleſs it be our Duty not to ſee *Inconſiſtencies, Contradictions*, and *Abſurdities*, when they appear before us. We cannot give equal Credit to Writings abounding with theſe, when we know them; as to what is void of ſuch Confuſion—We may be deceived for want of Knowledge; but when the Nature of Things are known, we no longer heſitate about them. *The Underſtanding of Man is the Candle of the Lord* in him, and we are commanded not to *hide* or *ſmother* it, but to let it appear, *that all who approach thereto may ſee the Light*, that it may *ſhine before Men to the Glory of God* *. We have hitherto been examining into the Opinions of others, and the Foundation of *their* Opinions, but if we look carefully into the Nature of the Foundation itſelf, we ſhall be able to form a true Judgment by infallible Rules, not depending on uncertain Tradition from *others*, but on certain Knowledge of our own.

A Man tells me a Story, of the Truth of which I am wholly ignorant, one Part of it is found by Examination not true; it may then be a Queſtion if any Part is true, eſpecially that which cannot be examined, nor produce any Proof; at leaſt it may be impoſſible to diſtinguiſh the Truth of Facts from Falſhood, if artfully told, and mixed. Enquiry is commendable among wiſe Men: For 'tis a Mark of Folly to ſuffer oneſelf to be deceived, and a Mark of Wiſdom to find out Deceit. Thoſe that had the telling their own Stories as they pleaſed to their own Advantage, are not to be implicitly believed by Lovers of Truth; eſpecially when the Story-tellers, by their Pretenſions to Truth, require an implicit Faith. Theſe generally mix ſome true Hiſtory with their *mendacia ſacra*; the one is told with ſeeming Simplicity, and the other is tinctured with *Holineſs* to make the whole go down together, without ſeparating the Mixture and examining the Compound. The Accounts in which Errors appear, are not to be credited as human Teſtimony, much leſs as Divine.

Therefore I paſs on from examining the whole in the Groſs, or one Authority by another, to look

* Matth. v. 14, 15, 16.

look into its *own intrinsic Truth and Harmony*, maugre all Authority but that of Reason and the Nature of Things, which are eternal and invincible; and I doubt not but undeniably to prove, as the *wise Celsus* did, that the Christian Traditions destroy their own Authority.

Before I descend to Particulars, I shall lay before you, *Theophilus*, the whole Scope and Drift of the Author's Design; which after Quotations from *the Acts of the Apostles* concerning the Manner of St. *Paul*'s Conversion, and others from the *Epistles*, he lays down in one Paragraph the following Plan of his Argument.

IX. *The Observator's Plan and Argument shewn.*

St. *Paul*'s Advocate says, 'Now 'it must of Necessity be, that the 'Person attesting these Things of 'himself, and of whom they are 'related in so authentic a man'ner, either was an *Impostor*, who 'said what he knew to be false, 'with an Intent to deceive, or 'he was an *Enthusiast*, who by 'the Force of an overheated I'magination imposed on himself, 'or he was deceived by the *Fraud 'of others*; and all that he said 'must be imputed to the Power 'of that Deceit; or what he de'clared to be the Cause of his 'Conversion, and to have hap'pened in Consequence of it, 'did all really happen; and 'therefore the Christian Religion 'is a Divine Revelation.'

It should have been added, *or we are deceived by some unknown Writer concerning St.* Paul, *and by Epistles ascribed to him which he never wrote:* This Objection was suffocated in its Birth, which should have been principally answered; but the Impossibility of doing it, made it necessary to be taken for granted; that *the Authenticity of St.* Paul's *Writings cannot be doubted without overturning all Rules, by which the Authority and Genuineness of other Writings can be proved and confirmed.* But I have made the contrary evidently appear; and this might pass alone for a sufficient Answer to the Book. However, to do it *invincibly*, I shall shew, that supposing all these Writings genuine, they do not carry in them sufficient Evidence of Truth to confirm this honorable Author's Reasoning, but themselves bewray that Cause he has so well defended, and by impartial Scrutiny, the Defence will disappear, like imaginary Castles in the Air.

He attempts to prove, that 'St. 'Paul could not be an *Impostor*, 'because, as he argues, he was 'disinterested respecting Wealth, 'Reputation and Power, that he 'resigned for the Sake of Christi'anity his Fortune, Credit and 'Religion; that he had acquired 'the Contempt and Vengeance 'of the more wealthy, powerful 'and reputable Party, by desert'ing them; that the Morals he 'taught all tended to Peace and 'Obedience; that what he did 'was not to gratify any irregular 'Passion; that the Consequence 'of embracing Christianity was 'the suffering Persecution; that 'the Glory he sought could not 'be that of being the *Author* of 'the Christian Religion; that he 'had no Confederacy with the 'Apostles, none with the Men 'that journeyed with him, none with

with *Ananias*. That he encountered the Policy and Power of the Magiſtrate, the Intereſt, Credit, and Craft of Prieſts, the Prejudice and Paſſions of the People, the Wiſdom and Pride of the Philoſophers; that he was no Enthuſiaſt, becauſe not inclined to *Melancholy*, nor *Credulity*, nor Vanity or *Self-conceit*, nor was he *ignorant* or impoſed on, and *Miracles* attended his Converſion and Miſſion.' Therefore the Author concludes thus,

'I ſhall then take it for granted, that he was not deceived by the *Fraud of others*, and that what he ſaid of himſelf cannot be imputed to the Power of that Deceit no more than to wilful Impoſture, or Enthuſiaſm: And then it follows, that what he related to be the Cauſe of his Converſion, and to have happened in Conſequence of it, did all really happen; and therefore the Chriſtian Religion is a Divine Revelation.'

Though the *Gentleman* takes the *whole for granted*, and ſo argues from every Particular as true; yet I perſuade myſelf he muſt have found it very difficult to have worked up every Thing in St. *Paul*'s *Favour* as he has done; for he muſt needs know that *Paul* was *not always punctual to Truth*. When I have delivered my Thoughts on this Subject, I will make no Concluſion, that our great Apoſtle of the *Gentiles* was either an *Enthuſiaſt* or an Impoſtor; but ſhall leave you, *Theophilus*, to make what Concluſions you pleaſe, who have often drawn more juſt Conſequences from what I have ſaid, than I cared to mention. Refulgent Truth carries its own Conviction with it. For my Part, I ſhould not have ſcrutinized his Character, if it had not been repreſented with a falſe Glare; nor have Thought him an Impoſtor, if the contrary had not been endeavoured to be proved: For it is ſeldom Things are queſtioned 'till examined.

X. *Some ſlighty Conſiderations, and of St.* Paul's *Flight into Heaven.*

You know, Sir, my natural Temper, which I muſt be indulged in. You have often compared me to a Man who being about to leap, friſks it a little beforehand, to try the Pliableneſs of his Joints, and the Elaſticity of his Nerves, which, however diſpleaſing it was to you at firſt, is now a Matter of Diverſion, and ſomething of this ſeems to me as neceſſary in dry Reaſoning, as the Entertainments at a Play between the Acts.

This *Gentleman* little thinks he is perverting the Words of Chriſt, and overturning the Foundation of the Church, while he endeavours to *defend* both; for Chriſt ſaid unto St. *Peter*, * *upon thee will I build my Church*; but this Author builds it on St. *Paul*; Now ſince the *old* Foundation is forſaken, we are to examine the Strength and Security of the *new*. For now good Chriſtians being reduced by the Perſecutions of Reaſon, are willing to lay hold on any Thing to ſave their rich Church and their poor Souls, in equal danger; for if they fall upon

* Matth. xvi. 18.

upon the Rock of Reaſon, their hold is *broken*, and if this Rock fall on the Church, *it will grind it to Powder*. But now their Hold being broken, and the *old* Foundations ſhaken; (for if they were not, what need they ſeek a *new*;) they ſtick to the Skirts of St. *Paul*, and in his Sanctuary they ſeek Refuge from threatening Death, and their expected Diſſolution.

Since then the Church is brought to hang on this *ſingle Thread*, it is no hard Matter to cut it in two, were it lawful to be done: But this Thread of Fate by the Law of Cuſtom will preſerve it; for the ſame Arguments that would prove a Man *now living* to be an Impoſtor or an Enthuſiaſt, cannot prove a Man that lived 1700 Years ago and upwards to be one; and the Arguments that would be formidable when applied to *Whitefield*, *Weſley*, or any other Perſon among us, loſe all their Force when applied to the Apoſtle *Paul*; otherwiſe it would not be impoſſible to prove the latter Perſon belonged to one of the former Orders.

I do not doubt but Mr. *Whitefield*'s moral Character is as good as St. *Paul*'s, who never perſecuted the Church, or withſtood the Biſhop of it to his Face; yet I do not think his, or any other Man's moral Character, in this Age, would ſave him from being nominated in the liſt of *Impoſtors*, or *Enthuſiaſts*, if he ſhould write, or ſay, that * *he knew a Man in Chriſt that ſome Time ago was caught up into the third Heaven, and heard unutterable Words, ſuch as are not lawful for any Man to utter*.—If they *could not* be uttered, what need has he to plead the Unlawfulneſs of doing it? There is no Fear of his breaking the Law by doing what he could not do. But why did they in Heaven, in St. *Paul*'s hearing, ſpeak that which was not lawful for him to utter on Earth? And what could they talk there which is unlawful to utter here? 'Tis ſtrange, and certainly needleſs, that any law ſhould be made on *Earth* to cut off News from Heaven; or an Intercourſe from thence! I fancy it to be ſomething like the Voice that ſpoke to *Paul* going to *Damaſcus*, which, tho' 'tis ſaid the Men that journeyed with him *heard*, they were by them unſpeakable Words; becauſe 'tis ſaid they *heard them not*. Do Angels never bluſh at talking before Men what is *not lawful for a Man to utter?* If *they* never bluſh at what *they* ſay, I think *this Saint* ſhould at what he ſaid. Should a modern Saint make the foregoing Declaration, and at the ſame Time confeſs this ſame Perſon to be *himſelf*; and own that where he then was he could not tell; whether *a great way off from himſelf*, or *beſide himſelf*, what ſhould we think of him? and that † *leſt he ſhould be exalted above Meaſure, through the Abundance of Revelations, there was given unto him a Thorn in the Fleſh, the Meſſenger of Satan to buffet him, leſt he ſhould be exalted above Meaſure*. Which brought him down from his elevated State with his Legs prone to the Ground. For this *Thing* ‡ *he beſought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from him*. Wonderful Things are ſpoken of the heavenly Powers! What more wonderful

* 2 Cor. xii. 4. † Ibid. ver. 7. ‡ Ibid, ver. 8.

derful than that Heaven made him haughty, but it was the Devil that humbled him. If ſuch a Man was among us, ſhould we not ſay he was an *Enthuſiaſt*, if he ſaid as he meant, or an *Impoſtor*, if he did not. For a Man to pretend to loſe himſelf in Heaven, and find himſelf with the Devil, to be loſt in Revelations and found in the Myſtery of Darkneſs; this we ſhould ſay was an evident Mark of Enthuſiaſm, or there are no Marks of it in the World. But if he pretended this *to exalt his ſpiritual Authority*, we ſhould think him an Impoſtor. His being accounted a *Saint* would not be able to ſave him from this Sentence. I ſay thus it would be, if ſuch a Man was among us *now*; but if this be applied to any holy Perſon that once belonged to the Holy Land, the Cenſure would certainly be condemned. Therefore if this be referred to any primitive Saint there, it quite alters the Caſe. So one Man raiſes himſelf to Dignity by the ſame Way others are raiſed to Diſgrace pendent on the triple Tree. 'Tis well therefore our Arguments in *this* Age and Country cannot reach St. *Paul*; he is *three Stories higher* than Man's Reaſon can aſcend, and mounted ſo far out of Sight of it, that only *Satan* himſelf, or his Meſſenger, could find him out. The Meſſenger's Maſter found out *Paul*'s Maſter in the Wilderneſs, and now *Satan*'s Servant found out *Chriſt*'s Servant, and brought him out of a Wilderneſs, in which he had loſt himſelf. If the ſame battering Rams of Reaſon could ſhake the Fortreſs of St. *Paul*, as would bring to the Earth and ſhatter in Pieces the *Caſtles in the Air* erected and elevated by a *modern Saint*, I need not proceed on any other Particulars to anſwer my honourable Friend; but according to my promiſe, *Theophilus*, I make no Application, being unwilling to ſhoot the Game, when all the Pleaſure lies in hunting.

XI. *Of the bleſſed Zeal of St.* Paul's *curſing Spirit.*

What is Goſpel-zeal in St. *Paul*, would be an enthuſiaſtic Flaſh in a *modern Saint*, if that holy Apoſtle had not happily led and ſanctified the Way, as he has done, which the Church has paved. What he has ſaid, and through Vehemence repeated, ſhews us beyond all Contradiction of any diſſenting Teacher, that this Man, who * *was not a whit behind the chiefeſt Apoſtle*, and yet the chief of *Sinners* †, (the chiefeſt Signal of Humility in himſelf, and greateſt of all Compliments to his Brethren) who was ſo greatly dignified with ſuch diſtinguiſhing Virtues, who was *highly* in the Favour of Heaven to be ſo *exalted and mighty* in the *Power of Chriſt*; I ſay, it ſhews by his flaming Zeal, that this high and mighty Saint was a *High-churchman*, or a *Dutchman*; for high and mighty he was in the *Spirit*, however low and mean he was in *Perſon*, or poor and diſtreſſed in *State*.

To the *Galatians* he writes thus, ‡ *I marvel that you are ſo ſoon removed from him that called you into the Grace of Chriſt, unto another*

* 2 Cor. xi. 5. † 1 Tim. 15. ‡ Gal. i. 6, 7, 8, 9.

another Goſpel! which is not another! But there are ſome that trouble you, and would pervert the Goſpel of Chriſt. But tho' we, or an Angel from Heaven, preach any other Goſpel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accurſed. As we ſaid before, ſo ſay I now again, If any Man preach any other Goſpel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accurſed (*a*). To be ſure this Expreſſion was inſpired by Heaven, for Heaven is in the Expreſſion. He was warm, true; but then it was true Warmth, that is, he was hot; but then he was no *Laodicean*, a Generation of Men that were neither cold nor hot, mild, moderate Men, fit to be *ſpued out of the Mouth* of Chriſt, which is his Church. He breathed Fire, true; but then it was the Nature of the Goſpel ſo to do. It came * *to ſend Fire on the Earth*, and it was *already kindled*; and *the Zeal of the Lord's Houſe*, the *Lord Jeſus's Houſe eat him up*. He curſed the Angel that ſhould dare to preach a Goſpel Doctrine different from what he had preached; but then it was on *Chriſt*'s and the *Goſpel*'s Account. † *If a Man come unto Chriſt and hate not Father and Mother, Wife, Brethren, Siſters, Friends, and his own Life, for Chriſt's Sake and the Goſpel's, he cannot be his Diſciple.* And ſurely there is not an *Angel in Heaven* ſo nearly related to us as *theſe* are, or as ourſelves are related to our own Lives. Now this having been proved to be a true Goſpel-Spirit, cannot be the Spirit of Enthuſiaſm. To think otherwiſe, is not to have an Evangelic Taſte. And it is a ſhrewd Sign of an Infidel Age, of a *wicked and adulterous Generation, to* believe an *Angel from Heaven*, rather than a *Miniſter of the Goſpel!* and indeed, if ſuch an one has the Power of ‡ *remitting and retaining to Men their Sins*, who of the Congregation dare diſbelieve his *Parſon* for his Soul? For he that has courage enough to *curſe an Angel from Heaven* for contradicting him, would thunder upon a poor Soul that was under his ſpiritual Authority the terrible Wrath of an angry God, and the eternal Torments of relentleſs Vengeance.

Indeed I cannot help thinking, however this Sentence may be condemned by Infidels, or may be lampooned by the Unrighteous, it was an evident Demonſtration that biſhop *Paul* was a very good *High-Churchman*; this being an excellent Subject for an Argument againſt Toleration: For this great Apoſtle would not tolerate an *Angel from Heaven* that preached another Goſpel than he preached, or give *another Senſe* to his Goſpel than himſelf gave, for he owns, it was *not another Goſpel* that he was ſo much concerned about, but a different Explanation that perverted his Meaning or Preaching, which obliged him to unſheath the apoſtolical Sword of the Spirit. Therefore *no* Toleration ought to be

(*a*) St. *Jerome* from this Place endeavours to prove, that the Zeal of Churchmen ought to be ſo great towards all Heretics and their Doctrines, that they ſhould anathematize them, let them be ever ſo dear to them. In which Caſe, ſays our holy Doctor, I would not ſpare my own Parents.

* Luke xii. 4, 9. † Ibid. xiv. 26. ‡ John xx. 23.

be allowed *Diſſenters*, if we follow the bleſſed Example of this great Apoſtle, though their Miniſters ſhould be *Angels from Heaven*. Ah! *Theophilus*, how many good Churchmen and others that have a *Zeal* for the Goſpel mourn *inwardly* theſe wicked, Free-thinking Days, and pant after ſuch Goſpel Times, when the Devils ſcoured off wherever its Miniſters came; and all that were Enemies to their bleſſed Power, were curſed Devils, and when *Angels* themſelves ſhould dare to be diſobedient to them, were threatened with Church Anathema's.

We have been ſhewn already that Paul was no Enthuſiaſt by this Expreſſion, but an orthodox, Goſpel-ſaint; and in like Manner it can be no Proof of Impoſture; for the *Diction* or Malediction of the Speech ſhewed the Fervour and Sincerity of his Heart. And why ſhould not a Biſhop's Malediction be as much dreaded as his Benediction is deſired? St. *Paul* was determined never to *alter* his Opinion, right or wrong, nor to ſuffer any others to alter the Principles he had taught them, as much as lay in his Power; and that they ſhould be curſed if they did: Which is a true High Church Spirit. And as I think it will be granted, that no Man would be Fool enough to utter ſuch an Expreſſion without the utmoſt Sincerity; it argues undeniably, that it was not the Speech of an Impoſtor (unleſs it was an Enthuſiaſtical one.) Indeed if a modern Saint, or Methodiſt, ſhould bid his Hearers, or Readers, curſe the Angel that contradicts his Preachments, we ſhould think the cool Air was beſt for him, opening a Vein, an Emetic of Hellebore, ſhaving his Head, Spring-water and a cooling Regimen might be of Service; but 'tis my Opinion, that he ought by no Means to be forbid Preaching *ex tempore*, but rather be excited to that Exerciſe 'till he is faint with Sweat, for it prodigiouſly helps thoſe fiery Spirits to evaporate.

What he writes to the *Romans* is uſhered in with a *very ſolemn Affirmation*, and not without Reaſon, for it needs it. As when I was young, the Stories of Spirits and Witches, which I heard, were generally introduced with Atteſtations of the Truth, leſt they ſhould be diſbelieved; for no Man would be ſuch a Fool alone as to believe what no Body elſe does, nor willing to aſſert what no Body is willing to believe. *I ſay the Truth in Chriſt*, (ſays this Apoſtle) * *I lie not, my Conſcience bearing me Witneſs in the Holy Ghoſt, that I have great Heavineſs and continual Sorrow of Heart; for I could wiſh myſelf accurſed from Chriſt, for my Brethren my Kinſmen according to the Fleſh.* We ſeldom hear a Man ſay, he does not Lie, unleſs he is very apt to Lie; and then generally he lies moſt: And he that will lie ſeriouſly and ſtrenuouſly, will ſwear to it, when he thinks he cannot be believed without. And becauſe the Holy Ghoſt is the Spirit of Truth, he has been called upon to witneſs the greateſt Lies in the World. To be *accurſed from Chriſt* is to be one of thoſe to whom *Chriſt* ſhall ſay, † *Go ye Curſed into everlaſting Fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* Could *Paul* wiſh to be damned that his Brethren might be

* Rom. ix. 1, 2, 3.

† Matth. xxv. 41.

be ſaved? If he was ſincere, it could be only to be damned for a little while, that is, to go to a gentle Purgatory; otherwiſe ſuch an Expreſſion ſeems to ſuit the Pen of one, who thinks to be *accurſed from Chriſt* is a very light Matter. Whether this be the Sign of Impoſture in a profeſſed Believer, do you, *Theophilus*, judge. But if I am able to underſtand it in any other Senſe at all, I think, for the Salvation of the *Jews*, he wiſhes the ſame Sentence on himſelf which he pronounces as Penance againſt the Fornicator *; *to deliver ſuch an one to Satan for the Deſtruction of the Fleſh, that the Spirit may be ſaved in the Day of the Lord Jeſus.* This is a kind of *ſpiritual Amputation*, to damn the Fleſh to ſave the Spirit; or to ſave half, and damn half; when the whole cannot be ſaved, to ſave a Remnant. And to be ſure *'tis better to go into Heaven halt, or maimed*; limping, or ſquinting, *than to have the whole Body caſt into Hell Fire.* No doubt but it muſt be a Mortification to ſuch a Perſon in Heaven to ſee other People have Fleſh upon their Bones there, but Satan has devoured his, and left him a walking Skeleton! ſuch a one I fancy muſt make but an odd Figure in Heaven. If St. *Paul* may be believed, that he *had great Heavineſs and continual Sorrow of Heart*, then it has no Meaning, any more than that it is the Effect or Proof of a very melancholy Diſpoſition; and this is one of thoſe Soils, as my honourable Author ſays, Enthuſiaſm ſprouts from. But the principal Source of Enthuſiaſm I attribute to the irregular Circulation of the animal Fluids, now rapid, now languid; the Ebbs and Floods of Joy and Sorrow; and an unequal Tide of the Paſſions, which ſometimes roll with a rapid Torrent, and ſometimes ſeem to ſtagnate. When ſuch a Mind has Religion for its chief Object, it produces Enthuſiaſm.

XII. *The Character of St.* Paul *by his Writings.*

That my Adverſaries may have nothing to reply, I agree to reaſon with them on their own Foundation. Indulge me therefore with the ſame Freedom in doing it, *Theophilus*, as yourſelf would take, if *your* Soul was in *my* Soul's ſtead, and was conducted by the ſame Reaſon. You, Sir, to whom I have oft expoſed the naked Sentiments of my Heart, will pardon the Weakneſs that may attend the beſt intended and well meant Performance of a Friend, that has no deſign to *deceive*, nor to *be deceived*.

Let St. *Paul*'s Character be wrought up with ever ſo much ſacred Art, it is unluckily the only Cauſe of expoſing it the more; not that his Character would ſignify any Thing, but as the Illuſtration of Truth itſelf is made to ſtand or fall with it.

Certainly St. *Paul*, if we are to believe the Writings which are received for his, and the Hiſtory of him, was as ſtrange a heterogeneous Mixture of Stuff, as odd a Compound of Fleſh and *Spirit*, as e'er was jumbled together in human Chaos. There were *two Men*, in this one Man *Paul*,

* 1 Cor. v. 1, 2, 3, 4.

Paul, the old Man, and the new Man; the Man of Righteouſneſs, and the Man of Sin; he had *two Bodies*, a natural Body, and a ſpiritual Body, the Body of Sin and Death, and the Body of Life and Righteouſneſs; he had in himſelf *two* Laws that governed him; the Law of Sin, and the Law of Righteouſneſs; the Law of the Mind, and the Law of the Fleſh. Theſe two Perſons, the carnal Perſon and the ſpiritual Perſon compounded, made a third Perſon, the Human, or the human Perſon was ſomething elſe diſtinct from both; like the Alchemiſts *Salt*, *Sulphur*, and *Mercury*, of which they ſay, all Bodies are compounded and reducible to; the ſpiritual Perſon danced him up into the *third Heaven*, the carnal and ſenſual Perſon brought him down to the *Devil*, who buffeted him, and pricked him with a Thorn. Never was poor Wretch ſo toſſed in a Blanket as this poor Saint was between theſe two; and each of theſe three Perſons could talk by himſelf. The carnal Perſon ſays, (*a*) *In me, that is, in my Fleſh dwelleth no good Thing.* And (*b*) *I am carnal ſold under Sin.* The human Perſon ſays, (*c*) *If I do the Things I would not, it is no more I that do it, but Sin that dwelleth in me.* And (*d*) *now I ſpeak not the Lord again*, (*e*) *Say I theſe Things as a Man, and ſaith not the Law the ſame alſo?* The ſpiritual Perſon ſays, (*f*) *I live, yet not I, but it is Chriſt that liveth in me, and the Life that I now live in the Fleſh, I live by the Faith of the Son of God:* And again, (*g*) *For me to live is Chriſt, and to die is Gain.* (*h*) *The Spirit of Chriſt hath made me free from the Body of Sin and Death.* Now, (*i*) Sin predominates, and he groans under Bondage, anon Grace is more abounding than Sin, and he triumphs in Freedom. (*k*) At this Time *he keeps his Body in Subjection leſt he be caſt away.* At another Time (*l*) *he is perſuaded that no Power can ſeparate him from the Love of God which is in Chriſt Jeſus.* Now (*m*) *he withſtands* Peter *and the other Apoſtles to the Face*, for temporizing; at other Times, (*n*) *he is all Things to all Men, that by all Means he might gain ſome.* He declares to the *Galatians*, (*o*) that *if they are circumciſed Chriſt ſhall profit them nothing*; he tells the *Romans* (*p*), *Circumciſion verily profiteth if thou keep the Law.* He informs the *Corinthians*, (*q*) that *Circumciſion is nothing, and Uncircumciſion is nothing.* Juſt now (*r*) *he wiſhes himſelf accurſed from Chriſt for his Brethren the* Iſraelites; that they might believe and be ſaved; Faith being made the Condition of Man's Salvation; and ſays, (*s*) *Becauſe of Unbelief they were broken off.* By and by he tells *us* (*t*), *all* Iſrael *ſhall be ſaved*: And that (*u*) *God has concluded them all in Unbelief, that he might have Mercy*

(*a*) Rom. vii. 18. (*b*) Ibid. ver. 14. (*c*) Ibid. ver. 20. (*d*) 1 Cor. vii. 12. (*e*) 1 Cor. ix. 8. (*f*) Gal. ii. 20. (*g*) Phil. i. 21. (*h*) Rom. viii. 2. (*i*) Rom. vii. 24. (*k*) 1 Cor. ix. 27. (*l*) Rom. viii. 35, 36, 37, 38, 39. (*m*) Gal. ii. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15. (*n*) 1 Cor. ix. 19, to 22. (*o*) Gal. v. 2. (*p*) Rom. ii. 25. (*q*) 1 Cor. vii. 19. (*r*) Rom. ix. 3. (*s*) Ibid. xi. 20. (*t*) Ibid. xi. 26. (*u*) Ibid. 32.

upon all: And that (*x*) Chriſt is *the Saviour of all Men, eſpecially thoſe that believe*; therefore alſo of them that believe not. One while (*y*) the *elected Remnant only ſhall be ſaved, and the reſt are blinded.* At another Time, (*z*) *the Grace of God that brings Salvation, has appeared to all Men*; and (*a*) *God will have all Men to be ſaved, and come to the Knowledge of the Truth.* Here he declares, (*b*) *God will render to every Man according to his Works*; (*c*) there he aſſures us, that Salvation is *not* acquired *by Works, leſt any Man ſhould boaſt.* He bids, (*d*) *work out your own Salvation with Fear and Trembling*; and for a Reaſon why this ſhould be done, he weakens the Force of his Precept, by ſaying, *for it is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his own good Pleaſure.* Now he maintains, (*e*) that *the Doers of the Law ſhall be juſtified*; and by and by declares, *(f) by the Deeds of the Law ſhall no Fleſh be juſtified*; and therefore concludes *a Man is juſtified by Faith, without the Deeds of the Law:* And then asks the Queſtion, as if he knew not what he had ſaid, (*g*) *Do we then through Faith make void the Law?* Yes ſure. And yet he ſays, *God forbid, yea we eſtabliſh the Law.* How can that be? Certainly the Law is made void, with reſpect to *Juſtification*, and not eſtabliſhed. But ſuch is his Reaſoning, which is contrary to Reaſon. I believe this may be found to be a general Rule, and a true Teſt of Enthuſiaſm. *An Enthuſiaſt cannot reaſon well; and he that reaſons well cannot be an Enthuſiaſt.* I do not add, *upon right Principles*, becauſe that depends upon Knowledge. It would be too tedious here to recount the Variety of Temper and of Art that abounds in all his Epiſtles, equal to the Variety of Matters contained therein; of complaining and boaſting, threatening and ſoothing, inſulting and coaxing, triumphing and begging, jeering and irony, his Exaltations and Dejections; always contented and ever craving; now the higheſt Saint, and anon the greateſt Sinner. His Doctrine and Practice was like his Temper; he was *all Things to all Men*, that ſcarce any Man knew what to make of him; and ſo diverſified are the Modes of his Expreſſion, that ſometimes no Man can be certain what he means, or drives at. Certainly, *Theophilus*, he was the oddeſt Apoſtle of them all; *being born out of due Time*, and ſo made in a very odd Manner.

XIII. *Whether falling from Grace or Predeſtination was St.* Paul's *Doctrine?*

(*h*) The *Gentleman*'s citing, 1 Cor. ix. 27. *I keep under my Body and bring it into Subjection, leſt by any Means when I have preached to others, I myſelf ſhould be caſt away*; and his arguing rationally thereon againſt all other

(*x*) 1 Tim. iv. 10. (*y*) Rom. xi. 7. (*z*) Titus ii. 11. (*a*) 1 Tim. ii. 4. (*b*) Rom. ii. 6. (*c*) Epheſ. i. 9. (*d*) Phil. ii. 12, 13. (*e*) Rom. ii. 11. (*f*) Rom. iii. 20, 28. (*g*) Rom. iii. 31. (*h*) This which the Gentleman has thrown into a Note, I have made Obſervations on in the Text.

ther Doctrines that contradict it, as not being taught by St. *Paul*, is no Argument that St. *Paul* reaſoned in the ſame Manner; or *could* reaſon ſo well. Unleſs this Reaſoning can blot out every Sentence of *Paul*'s Writing that militates therewith, it is of no Force. This *Saint* had too much *Heat* to *reaſon* coolly, and too great a Croud of tumultuous Ideas to range them in good Diſcipline, as the Incoherence of his Writings, ſudden Change of Subjects, and Darkneſs of Expreſſion ſhew. He was too full of *Alluſions*, Types and Figures to conſider rightly of Realities. *Elimas*'s Reaſoning ſet him a raving (*i*); Objections to his Doctrines ſets him upon Exclamation, and calling Names (*k*). Aſk him, why God is repreſented as finding Fault, if nothing reſiſted his Will, and there was no Fault but what was of his own making? And he anſwers foreign to the Matter, *who art thou, O Man! that replieſt againſt God?* When he treats of the *Reſurrection*, (*l*) aſk *with what Bodies Men ariſe?* And he cries, *thou Fool, that which thou ſoweſt is not quickened except it die.* But this is anſwering like a *Fool*, for if the Seeds that are ſown die; they are never quickened or bring forth. To exalt Folly above Wiſdom, (*m*) he brings in *the Fooliſhneſs of God*; and argues moſt fooliſhly (*n*), that *becauſe the World by Wiſdom knew not God, therefore God had choſen the fooliſh Things of the World to confound and deſtroy the Wiſdom of the Wiſe, and bring to nothing the Underſtanding of the Prudent.* If Man's Wiſdom is too ſhort to know God, can Folly reach him! If Wiſdom is an Attribute of Deity, can he deſpiſe his own attributed? Or does he love Wiſdom in himſelf, and Folly in Man? Idle and prepoſterous! Whatever St. *Paul* meant, one would think he wanted Wiſdom by this Expreſſion, or deſpiſed it to pleaſe *Fools*.

That St. *Paul's keeping under his Body, and bringing it into Subjection, leſt when he had preached the Goſpel of Salvation to others, himſelf ſhould be caſt away*; does militate againſt the Doctrine of abſolute *Predeſtination*; there is no Queſtion, if taken in the common and obvious Senſe: Yet whether this may not be explained in Favour of that Doctrine, is a Queſtion; and whether it is capable of blotting out all other Expreſſions which inſinuate that Doctrine is another Queſtion; but whether he never contradicted himſelf is no Queſtion at all.

Firſt, As before St. *Paul* drops this Expreſſion he ſhews, that *he was made all Things to all Men, for the Goſpel's Sake*; therefore (*o*) *he became weak to thoſe that are weak, to gain the weak*, that the weak Brother might not periſh, through his acting according to Knowledge (as in the Caſe of eating Meats offered to Idols) ſo this may be underſtood to be ſpoken to thoſe weak Believers, that were to be fed with Milk and not with ſtrong Meat; as Children are deceived to make them take

(*i*) Acts xiii. 10. (*k*) Rom. ix. 19, 20. (*l*) 1 Cor. xv. 35, 36.
(*m*) 1 Cor. i. 25. (*n*) Ibid. ver. 19, 21, 27. (*o*) 1 Cor. i. 22.

their neceſſary Phyſic. If this be expedient, ſometimes for the Bodies Health, why not for ſick Souls. He told them there was the Prize of Salvation to be run for, and he gives this Start, to ſet them all a running, and this Spur to excite them to continue the Race. But did *keeping under his Body* prevent him from being *a caſt-away?* Certainly not at all, unleſs it was *the Body of Sin.* Will ſtarving the Body, or mortifying it, nouriſh and ſanctify the Soul, prepoſterous Superſtition! He intimates that he was not at an *Uncertainty* about the Matter; for the foregoing Words, to theſe under Examination are, *I therefore ſo run* not as uncertainly, *ſo fight I not as one that beats the Air; but I keep under my Body and bring it into Subjection, leſt that by any Means when I have preached the Goſpel to others, I myſelf ſhould* (ſeem to you to) *be a caſt-away.* If ſuch *ekings* out of Senſe, and ſometimes *takings away*, and *Alterations*, are not allowed, neither the *Precepts* nor *Principles* in the Scriptures will ſuit any one Sect of Believers in the World that ever were, or will be, without evident Inconſiſtencies and Abſurdities, and ſometimes downright *Contradictions*; but with theſe Helps, it will ſuit them all, and ſerve any Chriſtian Sect whatever.

2*dly*, Whether this Text is capable of blotting out all the ninth Chapter to the *Romans*, and all other Expreſſions which manifeſtly favour St. *Paul*'s Doctrine of Predeſtination, is another Queſtion. For 'tis impoſſible that thoſe whom God purpoſes to ſave by his Grace can fall away or fail of Salvation, if (*p*) *Men are not juſtified by the Law of Works, but by the Law of Faith*; if (*q*) *God imputes Righteouſneſs without Works*; if (*r*) *the Purpoſe of God according to Election ſtands, not of Works, but of him that calleth*; if (*s*) *a Remnant ſhall be ſaved according to the Election of Grace*; if (*t*) *by Grace Men are ſaved through Faith, and that not of themſelves but of the Gift of God, not of Works leſt any Man ſhould boaſt*; if (*u*) *the Saints are ſaved and called with a holy Calling, not according to their Works, but according to his own Purpoſe and Grace which was given in Chriſt Jeſus before the World began*; if (*x*) *the Kindneſs and Love of God towards Man appeared, not by Works of Righteouſneſs that they have done; but according to his Mercy he ſaves* them, *by the waſhing of Regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghoſt, who are juſtified by Grace*; if it be (*y*) *God that worketh in the Saints to will and to do of his own good Pleaſure*; if it be (*z*) *not in him that willeth, nor in him that runneth, but of God that ſheweth Mercy*; if (*a*) *he hath delivered the Saints* while on Earth *from the Power of Darkneſs, and tranſlated them into the Kingdom of his dear Son*; if (*b*) *all Things work together for good to them that love God who are called according to his Purpoſe*; if *whom he fore-*

(*p*) Rom. iii. 27. (*q*) Ibid. iv. 6, 23, 44. (*r*) Ibid. ix. 11. (*s*) Ibid. xi. 5, 6. (*t*) Epheſ. ii. 8, 9. (*u*) 2 Tim. i. 9. (*x*) Titus iii. 4, 5, 6, 7. (*y*) Phil. ii. 13. (*z*) Rom. ix. 16. (*a*) Col. i. 13. (*b*) Rom. viii. 28, 29.

knew

knew he predeſtinated to call, juſtify, and glorify; if (*c*) *none can lay any Thing to the Charge of God's Elect*; if (*d*) *God will have Mercy on whom he will have Mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth*; if (*e*) *God hath choſen the Saints in Chriſt before the Foundation of the World to be holy, and predeſtinated them to the Adoption of Children*; if *they have Redemption and Forgiveneſs of Sins through the Blood of Chriſt according to the Riches of his Grace*; if *God predeſtinates, and works all Things according to the Purpoſe of his own Will*, and (*f*) *juſtifies freely by his Grace through the Redemption that is in Jeſus Chriſt*, and ſuch like. What need a Believer then (to fear being a caſt-away, any more than that God's Purpoſe and Power can be defeated? And if theſe Sentences do not ſhew the Meaning of St. *Paul* in the Senſe they are here delivered, it is ſo very like it, if he be to be underſtood by his Words, that nothing can be more ſo. If it be an Error, 'tis evidently St. *Paul* leads thoſe that follow him into it, and is as evidently the Conſequence of following Principles for Truth, upon Truſt, or Authority in the Room of Reaſon.

XIV. *Of* Saul's *Diſintereſtedneſs and ſecret Call to Chriſtianity.*

Our *honourable Author* ſeems to believe that *Saul* in turning Chriſtian was diſintereſted, and had no worldly Views. But he and I don't ſee Things in the ſame Light. He conſiders him as a *Gentleman* and a *Scholar* as himſelf is, and that he demeaned himſelf to keep Company with Fiſhermen. A Scholar he might be to the other Diſciples indeed, but I conſider him as he was, a Perſon brought up to Labour. He was by Occupation a *Tent-maker*, a proper Perſon to be employed by poor Fiſhermen: For who ſo fit to live in Tents, as thoſe that cannot afford to build or hire Houſes? It does not appear that *Saul* was a Man of Wealth, or that he had any Fortune to truſt to, but that of his Head and Hands. His Inſtructor in Jewiſh Learning was *Gamaliel*; but *Saul* was not *Gamaliel*. His Maſter brought Honour to him; I don't read he brought any Honour to his Maſter. He was brought up to Labour, but Labour was not what he cared for; he had a working Head, not a working Hand. Therefore 'tis likely, in order to live an eaſier Life than that of Tent-making, he hired himſelf to the High Prieſt to be an Informer againſt the Chriſtians. At length, conſidering what a Hazard he run in proſecuting them; for they were not Quakers, as *Malchus*'s Ear was a Proof, and the Revenge taken againſt *Judas* (by God knows who) might be a Warning to him, that one Time or another he might be paid for his Pains; ſo that probably he might not run greater Hazards if he became of the Party he proſecuted; and in being one, what Advantages he might expect among them, his Learning, Art and Endeavour employed in their Favour, might make him the Head of their Party, their High Prieſt; the meaneſt

(*c*) Rom. viii. 33. (*d*) Ibid. ix. 18. (*e*) Epheſ. i. 4, 5, 7, 11. (*f*) Rom. iii. 24, 25.

eſt of whom got ſomething out of the public Stock for labouring in the Word and Doctrine, and the Apoſtles made a Living of it, for they could not after their making a Bank, *leave the Word of God to ſerve Tables*, conſequently not to ſerve *Fiſh* for Tables as formerly. *The Believers brought all their Money, and laid it down at the Apoſtles Feet*, and received out of the common Stock according to the Diſcretion of them and the Church; whereby they were now become a Society that took Care of their Poor and their Prieſts, and *Peter* could procure an *Angel* to free himſelf from Priſon upon Occaſion, conſequently *Paul* might get a good Living among them, with Reſpect and Authority; for he was not void of Ambition, whatever his Advocates may think, as will plainly appear; and 'tis better to an ambitious Mind, to be a King among Beggars, than a Beggar among Kings.

Whether ſome of thoſe that had the diſcerning of Spirits among the Diſciples did not ſee *through* him? Whether the Call to his Converſion was from *without*, or *within?* Whether the Apoſtles that had Power to work Miracles, did nothing towards his Converſion? Are Secrets unrevealed in the Myſteries of Providence, where we muſt leave them, and judge of *Paul*, by the Information we have of the *Paulites*. If the Call was wholly from *within*, the great Difficulty to him was to be a free and accepted Maſon in the Society at firſt. To ſay it might have been done better any other Way, if it had been in the Choice of Men, is pretending to judge better of Things at a Diſtance than near. All the Circumſtances and Motives are not made known to us, and is therefore judging in the Dark. Could *Man* chuſe a better Way for himſelf than he aſcribes to the *Lord?* Therefore I judge in that Caſe, the Method which was practiſed was the beſt.

There is no Doubt at all but the Converſion of one Adverſary to the Faith by virtue of a Miracle, whether it was real or pretended, if it was ſo neatly performed, as not to be ſeen through by the Vulgar, was a powerful Argument to them, and the beſt that could be to ſupport their Faith in Miracles, and the Faith of Doctrines founded thereon, and bring them over to it. And I am apt to think the Chriſtian Prieſts then, as well as now, would be very glad to buy a Miracle at almoſt any Price out of the public Stock, to triumph over Unbelievers. We ſee in our Days Bribes will work Miracles in the *State*, and why not in the *Church?*

He who was ſo full of himſelf could ſee no Reaſon to doubt of the Acceptance of his Labours in their Service, after they had accepted him, if he determined to be a Preacher, and to continue among them. His having been their Perſecutor, when once he was received, would redound to their Credit, and among them to his Advantage; beſides, by having been of the perſecuting Side he could fathom the Power of the Jew Rulers, and the Diſpoſition of the *Roman* Governors.

Saul knew the Diſciples made great Pretenſions to Miracles, Viſions, and Revelations; therefore that was the beſt Door to get in at, which Way would add to the

the Credit of those Things, best please the Disciples, and best silence his Adversaries; therefore he was by this Means the more eagerly received and regarded, and he could not afterwards recede therefrom without being notorious for Imposture, and abhorred by all Parties; this he must needs foresee, and therefore knew the miraculous Conversion being declared, and himself baptized, the Christians might assure themselves of the Reality of his Intentions.

XV. *Of the Morality of St.* Paul, *and other believing Saints.*

The Morality or Immorality of a Man's Conduct proves nothing with Regard to the Truth or Falshood of his Doctrines. Those that have been the Authors and Promoters of the most false Religions, have taught and practised Morality as much as others. Whatever Religion does not maintain that, cannot be maintained. No Body would chuse Christianity for the *Morals* of the Christians. Moral Virtue merely, seldom or ever produced Persecutions: For *who will harm you if you be followers of that which is good?* said *Paul* himself. It is Notions and Factions different from the Establishment, that those in Authority will not bear, which raises Persecutions or Opposition; not mere personal private Morality. The *Saints* called all their Sufferings Afflictions if by the Course of Nature; Persecutions, if from Men; tho' the one was the common Casualties of Life, and the other what their own indiscreet Zeal brought on themselves. Sufferings are common to Man, but if a *Saint* suffers, though perhaps justly or foolishly, he disturbs all Heaven and Earth as much as he can with his Prayers, Cries, and Clamours; he calls down Vengeance from above. *How long, Lord, how long wilt thou not avenge the Blood of thy Saints!* He construes all Accidents that befal his Adversaries to be the *just Judgments of God:* And thinks it *a righteous Thing with God to render Tribulation to those that trouble them.* They think it righteous to return *double Punishment* in Vengeance for what they have received. *In the Cup she hath filled to you, fill to her double,* is the Precept pleaded. No Revenge is too great for a *Saint*; therefore to satisfy their implacable Temper, eternal Burnings, and everlasting Torments have been invented. If the Jews were persuaded to turn *Christians* for the Sake of the moral Doctrines of Christianity, they were much in the wrong of it, for *the moral Precepts of the Law are better than the Precepts of the Gospel:* Therefore the Gospel was not advanced merely for the Sake of its *moral* Doctrines. Whatever Jew professes the Gospel with an intire Conviction of its being a Divine Revelation as taught by *Paul*, must give up the Law of *Moses* as such, unless he can believe that God can contradict himself, by altering and annulling his Laws, like Man. For how can *one* Divine Revelation set aside another, when the first was declared to be *an everlasting Law and an everlasting Priesthood?* But the *Gospel* according to the Author to the *Hebrews*, *changes both.* If *Paul* by his Doctrine

and Conduct ſhewed ſuch a Zeal as made his Followers *of all Men the moſt miſerable*, if he was without an entire Conviction that this latter Revelation was Divine, * *muſt have been mad, and worſe than mad, the moſt hardened Villain that ever breathed:* And if the Conſequence to be drawn from this is, that therefore he acted with Judgment and Honeſty, and that therefore the Chriſtian Religion is pure, and founded on right Principles, I leave you, *Theophilus*, or the Author himſelf to judge, whether this is not building the *Truth* of the Chriſtian Religion on the Honeſty or Truth of a Man that no Man knows any Thing of?

XVI. *Of* Saul's *Love to the Prieſthood, and Diſagreement with Prieſts.*

Saul ſeems to have had in him the natural Spirit of a *Prieſt*; for becauſe he was not qualified to ſacrifice Beaſts to maintain the Prieſthood, he had a prieſtly Zeal to ſacrifice Men and Women for its Support. He could not be a Prieſt among the Jews, as not being of the Tribe of *Levi*; and yet the Deſire of Prieſthood ſeems ſtrongly to have run in his Mind, though the Incapacity of becoming one run in his Blood, not being capable of exerciſing that Function which was by *Moſes*'s Law an hereditary Qualification. If he would have married the High Prieſt's Daughter, he certainly would have been as near related to the Prieſthood as he could. It looks as though he endeavoured to curry Favour with the High Prieſt, that he procured Warrants from him to perſecute the Prieſt's Adverſaries. A Man of his extraordinary Paſſions muſt have loved very fiercely, if he loved really; and if diſappointed with any manner of Contempt by the Damſel's Father, as diſdaining to marry her to a Tent-maker, muſt have been ſtung with very keen Reſentment; and the more ſo, ſince he endeavoured to make himſelf worthy of her by his Service to oblige the High Prieſt, and exalt the Honour of Prieſthood, by humbling and harraſſing its Enemies; or rather thoſe they were Enemies to, than thoſe that were Enemies to them. Beſides, there is a ſtrong Probability that he was diſappointed in Love, in that he never married afterwards; or elſe he was no Man, becauſe he taught for Doctrine, that *it was good for a Man not to touch a Woman.*

His turbulent Temper appears always to have carried him to Extremes, therefore it was, that he ſet all Places in an Uproar wherever he came; and acted with as much Madneſs againſt the Prieſts as he had acted for them. With what Contempt does he treat the High Prieſt when he was to plead his Cauſe before him? (tho' indeed he deſerved it), yet ſcarce any Man but himſelf would have ſaid, *God ſhall ſmite thee, thou whited Wall.* When he was reproved for *reviling God's High Prieſt*, as he is called, he endeavoured to excuſe himſelf by ſaying, what I believe was falſe, *I wiſt not Brethren, that he was the High Prieſt.*

If

* Obſ. p. 32.

If upon Diſguſt to the Prieſts, he had a Mind to oppoſe them, what Way could he more effectually take to do them a Diſpleaſure than eſpouſing the Cauſe of Chriſtianity? Not that Chriſtianity is deſtructive to Prieſthood, but that ſort of Prieſthood was deſtructive to the other. Or how is it improbable at leaſt that he might not be treated in ſuch manner by the High Prieſt, as he thought his Merit deſerved; (for Prieſts are a lofty ſort of Gentry) which his high Spirit not deigning to bear, and ſtifling his Reſentment then, might, by his ruminating on, kindle it the hotter. And when his Spirit took a different Turn from one Thing to another, he valued himſelf as much afterwards for ſuffering the Perſecution he could not avoid, (for he endeavoured to avoid all he could) as he had done before for being a Perſecutor: For we ſee in many Places he makes a Merit of it, and never fails to mention it to the Chriſtians, becauſe in both Caſes, or on each Side, he expected the Applauſe that fanned his Ambition.

XVII. *Of St.* Paul's *Love of Power and Authority.*

Superiority and Love of Power was no ſmall Ingredient in the Compoſition of *Paul*'s Temper, he affects Humility to raiſe himſelf, and boaſts of his Sufferings to exalt himſelf. When he would have the *Coriuthians* honour him as their ſpiritual Father, he ſets forth their reverential Duty, and his Merits to that Dignity. * *Let a Man ſo account of us, as of the Miniſters of Chriſt, and Stewards of the Myſteries of God.* This Dignity was enhanced by Sufferings; *I think*, ſays he, *that God hath ſet forth us the Apoſtles laſt, as it were appointed to Death; for we are made a Spectacle to the World, to Angels, and to Men.* We bear the Burden and Heat of the Day. And tauntingly upbraids thoſe that thought well of themſelves, and had too mean an Opinion of their Teachers, who merited Honour by their Sufferings and Labours. † *We are Fools for Chriſt's Sake, but ye are wiſe in Chriſt; we are weak, but ye are ſtrong; ye are honourable, but we are deſpiſed. Even to this preſent Hour we both hunger, and thirſt, and are naked, and buffeted, and have no certain Dwelling-place.* How ſhould they, when they lived by Rambling, and fared as Travellers do? ‡ *And labour, working with our Hands,* (when they could not avoid it, or thought it proper to do ſo.) *Being reviled, we bleſs; being perſecuted, we ſuffer it; being defamed, we intreat.* (Wonderfully pious!) *We are made as the Filth of the World, and the Off-ſcouring of all Things, unto this Day.* None complain more of being meanly uſed, than thoſe that are moſt proud. And when Religion is in the Caſe, Pride lurks under great Pretenſions to Humility. Profeſſion is the *Maſk* of Religion. Great Profeſſion of Piety and Humility oft ſhew a Want of it. I call to Mind I have ſomewhere read of *Diogenes* when he went to viſit *Plato*, treading on his Carpet, ſaid, *I trample on the Pride of* Plato. *With greater Pride*, Diogenes, anſwered *Plato*. St. *Paul* proceeds, *I write not*

* 1 Cor. iv. 1. † Ver. 9. ‡ Ver. 12, 13.

not theſe Things to ſhame you, but as my beloved Sons I warn you. For though you have ten thouſand Inſtructors in Chriſt, yet have ye not many Fathers; for in Chriſt Jeſus I have begotten you through the Goſpel. Yet we are commanded to *call no Man Father upon Earth* but *God* * in ſpiritual Matters. I ſuppoſe, however, he ſets up himſelf as a *leading Father. Wherefore* (to apply) *I beſeech you be ye Followers of me.* This is a Stride to Reverence. Look on me as your ſpiritual Father, and do as I teach you. *For this Cauſe I ſent unto you,* Timotheus, *who is my well-beloved Son and faithful in the Lord, who ſhall bring you into Remembrance of my Ways which be in Chriſt, as I teach every where in every Church. Timotheus,* an eaſy pliable Creature, who would do any Thing that his *father Paul* deſired, even to the ſuffering himſelf to be circumciſed to pleaſe him. *My* ways, and *as I* teach, and † *my Goſpel,* ſeem plainly to denote he taught ſomewhat peculiar to himſelf. Obſerve next the Diſplay of his Humility. *Now ſome are puffed up as though I would not come to you; but I will come to you ſhortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the Speech of them that are puffed up, but the Power. For the Kingdom of God is not in* Word, *but in* Power. *What will you? Shall I come to you with a* Rod, *or in Love, and in the Spirit of Meekneſs?* If the Word of Reaſon and the Power of arbitrary Authority are intended by theſe Words to be ſet in Competition, the ſofteſt Explanation of mine would be thought too ſevere. Therefore, *Theophilus,* I leave you to explain it for your ſelf.

At another Time, when he would exalt himſelf to the *loftieſt apoſtolical Seat,* he does it by ſhewing how he merited it by ſitting in the *loweſt.* The Pride of his *Humility* is glaring. When he ſays, *I* ‡ *ſuppoſe, I was not a whit behind the very chiefeſt of the Apoſtles. For though I be rude in Speech, yet not in Knowledge.* Conſequently, the Conceit of his own *Knowledge* had rendered him a little unpolite. After bouncing, and ſtoaſting, and pleading his Will and Pleaſure to boaſt, he ſums up his Sufferings as what gave him that Right. The Reaſon of doing this appears ſoon after; it was becauſe he wanted Praiſe. § *For I ought* (ſays he) *to have been commended of you: For in nothing am I behind the very chiefeſt of the Apoſtles, though I be nothing.* A very pretty Compliment on them, that he himſelf was as good as the beſt; and the beſt was good for nothing. So if we may join Parts that are diſtinct, he humbly ſuppoſes to the *Corinthians, he was not behind the very chiefeſt of the Apoſtles*; but in Writing to the *Epheſians,* he calls himſelf *leſs than the leaſt of all Saints. There is many a true Word ſpoke in Jeſt*; but by this it appears that *Paul* was no Saint, neither were any of the Apoſtles. What think you, *Theophilus,* is this ſpiritual Pride, or ſanctified Humility?

Over the *Corinthians* how does he flouriſh the paſtoral Rod of his apoſtolical Authority? ‖ *I call God for a Record upon my Soul, that to ſpare you I came not unto* Corinth.

* Matth, xxiii. 9. † Rom. xvi. 25. ‡ 2 Cor, xi. 5. § Ibid. xii. 11. ‖ Ibid, i. 23.

rinth. This I think is as good as ſwearing, that he came among them to brandiſh his Power, and expects them to regard it. *For this End alſo did I write that I might know the Proof of you, whether you be obedient in all Things.* Elſewhere he tells them, * *I told you before, and foretell you as if I was preſent with you the ſecond Time; and being abſent now I write to them which heretofore have ſinned, and to all other,* (ſinned or not ſinned) *that if I come again I will not ſpare*; and a little after, *Therefore I write theſe Things being abſent, leſt being preſent I ſhould uſe Sharpneſs, according to the Power which the Lord hath given me.* One would imagine by ſuch Language he was already cloathed with the *Purple* and the *Mitre.*

With what Authority he writes to them concerning their going to Law? † *Dare any of you having a Matter againſt another go to Law before the Unjuſt, and not before the Saints?* And with what a Blaſt of Wind does he ſwell their Vanity as well as his own? *Do ye not know that the Saints ſhall judge the World? And if the World ſhall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the ſmalleſt Matters? Know ye not that we ſhall judge Angels! how much more Things that pertain to this Life?* Pretty fellows indeed to judge Angels! when they never could agree together in their Judgment of what was right or wrong; but were ever dividing and ſubdividing into Sects, Schiſms, Hereſies, and Factions.

XVIII. *Of St.* Paul's *Conduct in propagating the Goſpel.*

When St. *Paul*'s Temper was turned againſt the Jewiſh Prieſts, the Perſecutions of the Jews on one Side, from whom he could never again hope for Favour, with the Affections, Honours, and Advantage of the Chriſtians on the other, kept him ſteady to that Party, over whom he preſided as Supreme in all Churches of his own Planting among the Gentiles; where he generally brought his ſpiritual Wares to a good temporal Market; and uſed all Arts to bring them in: For this Reaſon *he became all Things to all Men* ‡; and preached his Goſpel *privately* where he had Acceſs, *to thoſe that were of Reputation* §, *leſt he ſhould run in vain*; and *being* indeed *crafty* ‖, *he caught them with Guile.* He had always his *Milk for Babes* *†, *and Meat for ſtrong Men*, cooked up according to every one's Palate, and found his Account in it.

Peter went ſo far as to eat with the believing Gentiles who were Proſelytes of the Gate, not for ſetting aſide the *Moſaic* Law; but *Paul* was the firſt that maintained there was no Occaſion for the *believing Gentiles to be circumciſed, and keep the Law of* Moſes; and procured a Decree from a Council of the Apoſtles for that Liberty or Indulgence to the Gentile Believers. In which Point he was indefatigably zealous; for he knew,

* 2 Cor. xiii. 2. † 1 Cor. vi. 1, 2. ‡ Ibid. ix. 22. § Gal. ii. 2.
‖ 2 Cor. xii. 16. *† 1 Cor. iii. 2.

knew, that granting the ritual Law extended to the Gentiles, it muſt be neceſſary to the Jews; and if the Continuance of it was neceſſary, there muſt be alſo a Continuance of the Prieſthood; and that would aboliſh his own Right to it, who was a Prieſt by Nature, though not by lineal Deſcent from *Levi*. Therefore he declared, that the Goſpel made a *Change* * *both of the Prieſthood and the Law*; and wiſely ſet aſide the Levitical Law and Prieſthood; which being a great Charge and Slavery to the People to maintain, it was always diſliked by many; and now they were better enabled to declare againſt it, being under the Government of the *Romans*. This likewiſe tended to reconcile the Gentiles to Chriſtianity, made a wide Rent from the Jewiſh Religion, and ſet it on a Baſis diſtinct from both Jew and Gentile; which rendered it the more conſpicuous, and was the Occaſion of its not being ſwallowed up by either. Thus he modelled Chriſtianity, and was therefore, properly ſpeaking, *the Author of a new Religion:* Which he could only take the Advantage to do, under another Name, to which many through the Love of Novelty, and (as it then appeared) of Liberty, became Proſelytes. Probably the Stories of the Miracles and Viſions of its Profeſſors might draw in ſome. The keeping their Miniſtry was by free Gift without Compulſion as yet, (though it had not then Power to be otherwiſe) and therefore ſeemed agreeable; and the Terms of Acceptance were eaſy to them that could believe, or could pretend they believed: The main Article or Sum of it was declared to be this, † *That if thou ſhalt confeſs with thy Mouth the Lord Jeſus, and ſhalt believe in thine Heart that God hath raiſed him from the Dead, thou ſhalt be ſaved. For with the Heart Man believes unto Righteouſneſs, and with the Mouth Confeſſion is made unto Salvation.* This new Religion was likewiſe charitable to the Poor, which made it appear kind and acceptable to many, and their public Worſhip ſeems to have been managed in the manner the Quakers now is. Many Chriſtian Sects have no doubt improved and mended it; for nothing is perfect at firſt: But the *Roman* Church particularly hath gone from bad to worſe, and added Corruption to Corruption: Thus being compleat in every Thing vile, have compleated the vileſt Church on Earth.

The Apoſtle *Paul* being a Jew by Religion, and a *Roman* by Birth, could talk both Languages; and being alſo born in a *Grecian* City, might have ſome Knowledge of the *Greek:* Therefore he was better qualified than the other Apoſtles, becauſe *he ſpoke with Tongues* ‡ *more than they all*; ſo he was fit by this Means to preach among the Gentiles, which the others were not; and with the Liberty of a *Roman* for his Protection, he made his Peregrinations in the Countries about, in *Aſia*, *Greece*, and *Rome*; by which Means his Doctrine became public to thoſe Parts that were under the Subjection of the *Romans*. There is therefore no Reaſon to believe *the Gift of Tongues* was any Thing

* Heb. vii. 12. † Rom. x. 9, 10. ‡ 1 Cor. xiv. 18.

Thing more than preaching and praying *ex tempore*; but this there is no doubt they did, as they made great Pretenſions to the Spirit.

XIX. *Of Dreams, Viſions, and Inſpirations.*

Nothing is more eaſy than to pretend to ſee Viſions, and dream Dreams. Who can detect the Falſhood of ſuch Pretenders? When Lies are told in Favour of a Party, and eſpouſed by them, what Stories may not receive the Currency of Truth with ſuch? If *Whiteſield*, or the *Weſleys*, or any other Enthuſiaſt, was to ſay Chriſt appeared to him, we ſhould laugh at it, and 'tis likely none but his own Followers would believe him. I mention *theſe Men* particularly, as being in my Opinion the moſt likely Perſons to ſee Viſions, as they are the moſt notorious Enthuſiaſts of the Age among us; yet what *Believer* can argue againſt the Poſſibility of it? Or can give any Reaſon why *Chriſt* might not as well appear to either of theſe Saints as to St. *Paul*. Had any of theſe ever pretended or affirmed ſuch a Thing, I would fain know (allowing the one to be true) how is it poſſible for us to diſprove the other? Or what Proof can be given of it? Did not *John Reeves* and *Lodovic Muggleton* found their Impoſture on ſuch Pretenſion? And may not any other be founded on the ſame? Suppoſe *Saul*'s Viſion was true, and theirs not; and theirs true, and his not; or both true, or both falſe; who by the Circumſtances can determine it? The Authority of Numbers on one Side againſt a few on the other, will always carry the Point in Favour of the ſtrongeſt Party. If it be ſaid that Chriſt appeared to *Saul* in Company, and he is ſaid to appear to *Reeves* alone, we have none of the Company's Word for it; only ſomebody for *Saul*, we know not who. We have in St. *Paul*'s Favour, what? A bad Relation of a dark Relator; on this is erected a blind Faith. This is all the Proof we have of the Matter, that it was Fact; and that *Paul* was not an Impoſtor, nor an Enthuſiaſt; and that therefore the Truth and Brightneſs of Revelation is well founded. But if what has the Sanction of Truth by a Multitude, is no more than taken for granted by the Multitude, where is the Proof it? *Mahomet* might be eſteemed an Impoſtor at firſt; but is he thought ſo now, where his Religion reigns, and his Laws are obeyed? No certainly; Cuſtom alters the Face and Faſhion of Things, and Length of Time, in many Caſes, lays Truth and Falſhood on a Level. When Things cannot be eaſily enquired into, they paſs for Truth with the Careleſs and Indolent. Thus all Impoſture, when aided by Power, gains Ground in the World, in a long Tract of revolving Years, when the Proofs of the Impoſture are borne down, and by Force obliterated as much as Force can do on rational Minds: And the Torrent runs ſtrong to bear *him* down who ſtrives againſt the Torrent. Error, when it becomes habitual, is as pleaſing as Truth; as vicious Habits when indulged in Oppoſition to their contrary laudable Virtues, ſeem quite as agreeable,

agreeable, becauſe eſtabliſhed by Habitude.

It appears therefore impoſſible to know Truth by the Credit given to Inſpiration only. No Art was ever better calculated to deceive than Inſpiration. The Religion founded on Nature don't require it; but all others do. As natural Religion is not capable of Deception, ſo it cannot uſe thoſe Means that are. True Religion is all of a Piece: It is plain and true throughout, and cannot deceive, being founded on the Reaſon and Nature of Things. This is the only true Baſis of true Religion. What then, *Theophilus*, are all other Foundations and Religions? Can the Religion of Nature be built on any Thing but Nature? Can the Laws of God be leſs evident than Nature's Laws? Can the Truths of God be diſcoverable by any Thing leſs plain and certain than theſe, or can any Inſpiration from him be leſs general than that of natural Inſpiration? What is called ſupernatural, ſeems to me to be artificial. Where there is no Poſſibility of Deceit, there can be no Poſſibility of Impoſition. Certainly the greateſt Plainneſs is moſt neceſſary in all the Laws of God. Thoſe which cannot be found out nor tried by human Reaſon, cannot be his Laws; becauſe thoſe Laws cannot be a fit Guide to the human Mind, that are no Light to the Mind. Whatever hides itſelf from honeſt Scrutiny, teaches us to beware of Impoſture: Therefore whatever cannot be examined, for that Reaſon alone ought to be rejected, or the Credit of it to be eſteemed a Matter of Indifference. For Truth will bear Examination, and courts it; but Impoſture flies and fears it; and therefore ſhrouds itſelf in Viſions and Inſpirations. Theſe Things therefore require the niceſt Search, and ſtricteſt Enquiry.

When *Error* chances to bewray itſelf ever ſo little, it endeavours to plaſter and dawb the Matter up; becauſe, by a little Light, many Things are diſcovered to the jealous and enquiring Eye. It is like a Clue that leads you on, *Theophilus*, to the better Underſtanding other Things unthought of before. If an apparent Falſity be diſcovered in any *one* Particular, that can by cloſe Examination be found out, there is good Reaſon to be jealous of *more* that cannot be explored; for Lies lie cloſe; and Deceivers only diſcover themſelves by inadvertent or accidental Blunders. The Holy Ghoſt is pretended to as a cover for all holy Lies to uſher them into the World, and defend them afterwards; 'tis made the Parent and Nurſe of Error and Impoſture: They do wiſely then to prevent a Detection of theſe holy Frauds, to call it ſinning againſt the Holy Ghoſt, and the moſt damnable of all Sins. Though, if there be any blaſpheming or ſinning againſt the Holy Ghoſt, it muſt be when Men lay their Lies to the Holy Spirit's Charge. Let thoſe that believe this to be a dreadful Sin, beware of committing it; yet I am apt to think it is very often very ignorantly done, becauſe Men are more apt to believe than doubt; and the Holy Ghoſt is not well known: For he appears ſo ſecret among us, that 'tis as hard to diſtinguiſh him from the

Man

Man that appears for him, or in whom he is ſuppoſed to appear, as to know whether there be any Holy Ghoſt, now he has left off working Miracles; or, as to know whether his Seat be the third Step below the Father, or equal with him.

Let us neither be diverted nor terrified from Enquiry; but begin, and proceed with that Spirit of Boldneſs which Truth naturally gives. After theſe general Remarks, I proceed to examine and conſider the Truth of thoſe Traditions of this *Saint* which are handed down to us, and generally believed without any particular Examination.

XX. *Of the Voice that ſpoke to* * Saul, *which was heard and not heard.*

A notorious Contradiction appears at firſt View, upon comparing the Relation of *Saul*'s Converſion as told by the Hiſtorian, and what the ſame blundering Hiſtorian tells us *Paul* ſaid of himſelf. As the Hiſtory-writer delivers it, † *The Men that journeyed with* Saul *ſtood ſpeechleſs*, hearing a Voice, *but ſeeing no Man.* But *Saul*, or *Paul* himſelf ſays, ‡ *They that were with me ſaw indeed the Light, and were afraid, but they* heard not the Voice *of him that ſpake to me.* How comes it about think you, *Theophilus*, that theſe Relations are not alike? Are we to attribute theſe Blunders to the Holy Ghoſt? A Man that don't know whether there is any Holy Ghoſt or no, might, methinks, tell a Story twice alike. *Paul*'s Secretary ſays, the Companions that journeyed with him *heard the Voice:* But *Paul* himſelf, by the Confeſſion of the ſame Hiſtorian, tells us, that they *heard* not *the Voice.* The beſt Way I can think to reconcile it is, that *Saul*'s Companions (being abſent) heard not the Voice; but when they were preſent, they heard the Voice, that is, the Report of it, all that was to be heard; and there is ſome Reaſon for this too; for Apparitions and Viſions are modeſt Things, and never care to appear before Folks. Beſides, we find the Men that were with him never minded it; for it don't appear they were converted, the Voice ſpoke only to *Paul*, not to them; therefore how ſhould they hear it? Or they might hear *Saul* talk to, and anſwer himſelf; ſo they heard the Voice that ſpoke, all the Voice there was to hear, but they heard not the Voice of him that ſpake to *Saul:* How ſhould they? For the Voice ſpoke *in him*, and *Saul* heard it with his *inward* Ears. He that hears a Spirit ſpeak, muſt have ſpiritual Ears; but as for the Men that journeyed with *Saul*, it be may their Ears were made *dull of Hearing, leſt they ſhould hear and be converted*, or the Voice might ſyringe *Saul*'s Ears, and ſtop theirs, as well as the Light ſeal up *his* Eyes; or perhaps they heard a rumbling like a Voice; but whether it was human, or heavenly, or that of low Thunder, they diſtinguiſhed not: And ſo the learned Expoſitors and Paraphraſers agree, they heard the Sound, but not the Words; they heard they knew not

* He was called *Saul* before, and *Paul* after his Converſion. † Acts ix. 7. ‡ Ibid. xxii. 9.

not what; that is, they heard the Voice, and not the Voice; for the ſacred Writers were no Impoſtures; they wrote what they believed, and believed only what they knew to be true; they could not be impoſed upon, nor had they any Deſign to impoſe on others.

XXI. *How the Men that journied with* Saul *ſtood ſtill, and fell down.*

The Hiſtorian ſays, * *The Men that journied with* Saul ſtood *ſpeechleſs:* But St. *Paul* himſelf, in telling the Story, ſays, † *And when we were all fallen to the Earth.* One would wonder in reading this, what was become of the Holy Ghoſt; whether it had forſaken the Writer or Tranſlator; and *which Way went the Spirit from one to ſpeak to the other?* If they *ſtood*, how did they *fall* to the Earth? unleſs they ſtood ſome Time to conſider whether they ſhould fall or no, and then fell by Conſent, without ſpeaking a Word. If this be an Error only in the Expreſſion made by the Tranſlators, then our Book is not the Word of God in *Engliſh*, whatever it be in the *Greek*. But this Matter is not clearly made out; for that Story which acquaints us that the Men ſtood ſtill, only mentions that *Saul* aroſe from the Earth. If they had all fallen, and not got up again, *Saul* had wanted leading Strings. St. *Paul*, in telling the Story at another Time, ſays, ‡ *And I fell to the Ground*; not agreeing with what he ſays elſewhere, *when we were all fallen to the Earth*; and ſo leaves us *all a-ground*. But how ſhould he ſee what the others did? for he fell not till the Light came, and then he became blind.

XXII. *How the Light ſhone round about* Saul *only, and the Men alſo.*

We are alſo left in Darkneſs about the Light; for the Hiſtorian ſays, § *As* Saul *journied, he came near unto* Damaſcus, *and ſuddenly there ſhined round about* him *a Light from Heaven.* As St. *Paul* relates the Matter, ‖ *About Noon ſuddenly there ſhone a great Light round about* me. But at another Time, as he tells the Story to *Agrippa*, *† *At Mid-day, O King, I ſaw in the Way a Light from Heaven above the Brightneſs of the Sun, ſhining round about me, and them which journied with me.* It will be ſaid, here is no Contradiction. In the firſt Account St. *Paul only* is ſpoken of; afterwards, he ſpeaks of *himſelf, and them that were with him.* I grant it; but if it was not neceſſary to mention what Evidence theſe Companions of his had of the Matter, why does St. *Paul* in his firſt Relation of it only barely ſay, *The Men that were with me* ſaw *indeed the Light?* for one may ſee a Body of Light at a great Diſtance from it. But if the ſame Light, which was above the Brightneſs of the Sun, ſhone round them all, how comes it to paſs that they who journied with *Saul* were not made blind as well as *Saul* was. But to ſingle one Man out from a Company for Salvation, and to let the reſt go on and be damned, may be conſiſtent with the

* Acts ix. 7. † Ib. xxvi. 14. ‡ Acts xxii. 7. § Ib. ix. 3.
Ib. xxii. 6. *† Ib. xxvi. 13.

the Doctrine of peculiar and perſonal Election, but ſhews a peculiar Spirit of Partiality. If *Saul* was converted by a Miracle, it's a Miracle his Comrades were not converted too; or if they were, that we are not acquainted with it. And if Sinners are wrought upon by irreſiſtible Grace, or ſupernatural Power, where is Man's Free-will? And why don't Free-grace convert all, if Free-will is deficient? All Power is God's; therefore what he wills, nothing can reſiſt.

XXIII. *How the Words which the Viſion ſpake are reported different, at different Times.*

The Words which in the Viſion were ſpoke to *Saul* in one Relation of it, are not the ſame that are ſaid to be ſpoken in another. The Hiſtorian ſays, * *And* Paul *trembling and aſtoniſhed ſaid, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord ſaid unto him, Ariſe, and go into the City, and it ſhall be told thee, what thou muſt do.* 'Tis to the ſame Import, Chap. xxii. 10. But before King *Agrippa* nothing of this is mentioned; but a different Account is given by St. *Paul* thus: † *And I ſaid, who art thou, Lord? And he ſaid, I am Jeſus whom thou perſecuteſt. But riſe, and ſtand upon thy Feet: For I have appeared unto thee for this Purpoſe, to make thee a Miniſter, and a Witneſs both of theſe Things which thou haſt ſeen, and of thoſe Things in the which I will appear unto thee, delivering thee from the People, and from the Gentiles unto whom now I ſend thee, to open their Eyes, and to turn them from Darkneſs to Light, and from the Power of* Satan *unto God; that they may receive Forgiveneſs of Sins, and Inheritance among them that are ſanctified by Faith that is in me.* If the Words ſpoken to *Saul* were only heard by him, it was in his Power to make, or vary them as he pleaſed. The *Manner*, and the *Meſſage* of this Viſion is very unaccountable. To ſtrike *Saul down* and *blind*, and command him *to riſe*, and go to others *to open their Eyes!* ſure this was an odd Way to it; to turn *him from Light to Darkneſs*, and ſend him to the Gentiles, to turn *them from Darkneſs to Light!* If this be the Lord's doing, it is wonderful in our Eyes.

XXIV. *That neither* Saul *nor his Company were on Horſeback.*

It is rather to pull down the Pride of thoſe that have ſet their Hero on Horſeback, that I remark this, than to pull down *Saul* from his Horſe. The Hiſtorian ſays, that the Men who journied with *Saul ſtood* ſpeechleſs; and when he aroſe from the Earth, ‡ *they led him by the Hand.* It ſeems to me therefore that they walked it on Foot, tho' the *honourable Gentleman*, and ſome others, that are for exalting this Apoſtle, have ſet him on Horſeback; I don't think the Buſineſs would pay Horſe-hire; if it could, Times were finely mended with the Jews, whoſe Kings and Prieſts, when they ruled over other Nations, rode on Aſſes; and now they were ſubject to another Nation, to afford their Servants Horſes, and pay them Wages for

* Acts ix. 6. † Ib. xxvi. 15, 16, 17, 18. ‡ Acts ix. 8. xx. 11. xxii. 11.

harraſſing Beggars, is a fine Amendment indeed.

XXV. *Of* Saul's *practiſing ſevere Penance.*

When Saul *was come to* Damaſcus, *he was there three Days without Sight, and did neither eat nor drink*, as we are told, and might perhaps be true. Whether he loſt his Stomach, occaſioned by being frighted out of his Sins on the Road, or by loſing his Sight; as if the laſt great Light he ſaw was to be his laſt Light. But if he believed the Viſion, this could not be the Caſe; for how could he reſtore Sight to other blind Eyes, unleſs it was reſtored to his? It would be quite out of the Way to ſuppoſe, that in journeying a Flaſh of Lightning with Thunder ſtruck him to the Ground, and ſo affected his Nerves, that it brought on him a Fever, which deſtroyed his Stomach, and a Delirium, in which he ſo ſtrongly fancied all theſe Things were done and ſaid, that he was ſubject to Paroxiſms of a Fever on the Spirits, or a ſpiritual Fever, all his Life after; for nothing like this is mentioned in the Hiſtory. To inſinuate this, would be making myſelf too much like thoſe that inſinuate what there is no Warrant for in the Text, in order to juſtify it. But tho' Suppoſitions with them may paſs for Truths, Truth can ſupport me, or be ſupported by me, without Chimera's. I therefore think it better to deny the Truth of the whole Story, than account for it in ſuch a Manner, tho' 'tis not impoſſible nor abſolutely improbable; but this I declare, to ſhew myſelf a generous Adverſary to *natural* Infidels in favour of *biblical* Infidels. *Natural Infidels* are all thoſe that deny the Sufficiency of the Light of Nature in Favour of ſupernatural Light. *Biblical Infidels* are all thoſe that believe no Stories or Doctrines ſupernatural, tho' held forth in the Bible. All Men that believe differently, are Infidels to one another. So they that call others Infidels are Infidels themſelves.

This prodigious Faſting then ſeems to have been *a Fit of ſevere Penance*; for *behold he prays*, ſaid the Lord of him to *Ananias*. This was certainly overlooked by our honourable Author, who ſays, * *Though he was full of Remorſe for his former ignorant Perſecution of the Church of Chriſt, we read of no gloomy Penances, no extravagant Mortifications, ſuch as the Bramins, the Jaugues, the Monks of* la Trape, *and other melancholy Enthuſiaſts inflict on themſelves.* Surely not eating or drinking for three Days was a gloomy Penance, and an extravagant Mortification, unleſs he loſt his Stomach by the Fright, as I mentioned before, or he was ſtomachful.

XXVI. *Of the blundering Miracles, or miraculous Blunders performed at* Saul's *Converſion.*

One who reads the Story of *Saul*'s Converſion, would think the Lord work'd Miracles merely for the Sake of working Miracles; for ſome of them ſeem raſh and wrong; and then one or two more Miracles are wrought to ſet the bad Effects of the former to rights. *Saul* having been made dark by a bright Miracle, and blinded by the Lord, that he might ſee it was the

* Obſ. p. 71.

the Lord's Doings; three Miracles more are performed to recover his Sight, to rectify the bad Effects of the firſt.

Firſt, Chriſt goes himſelf to *Ananias*, leaving his Seat at the right Hand of the Father in the Manſions of Bliſs; he appears to him in a Viſion, to ſend him to *Saul*, (for now *Chriſt* is only to be ſeen viſionally) and gives him particular Directions to the Street, the very Houſe, and his Landlord's Name where he lodged. * *The Lord ſaid to him, Ariſe, and go into the Street which is called* Strait, *and enquire in the Houſe of* Judas *for one* Saul *of* Tarſus. Now 'tis ſtrange to me, that the *Lord Jeſus*, who is attended by not leſs than *twelve Legions of Angels*, could not or would not truſt one of them on the Errand, but went himſelf to carry a Meſſage fit to be ſent by a Porter. If he *humbled himſelf* before, by *taking on him the Form of a Servant, and made himſelf* once *of no Reputation*; I ſee no Reaſon why he ſhould do it again, now he was in a State of Exaltation and Glory. If it was not *Chriſt* that appeared to *Ananias*, but ſome ſpiritual Being, or Idea of him, how eaſily may one be bubbled or deceived by theſe ſpiritual Beings or Ideas.

Second, The Voice of the Viſion adds, *For behold he prayeth, and hath ſeen in a Viſion a Man named* Ananias, *coming in, and putting his Hand on him, that he might receive his Sight.* One would wonder he did not pray before! or if he did, that he was not heard before the third Day! for by this Time he muſt needs pray very weakly. The Viſion, that this Viſion ſaid, *Saul* ſaw, *Saul* never owned; therefore this Relation of a Viſion in a Viſion is to be queſtioned. Beſides, what need was there that *Saul* ſhould ſee *Ananias* in a Viſion, giving him Sight, before he ſaw him do it in reality, but to multiply Viſions to no Purpoſe? for ſure *Saul* could believe *Ananias* gave him Sight when he heard him ſpeak, and ſaw him and the Light that removed the Darkneſs. Theſe dark and viſionary Stories ſeem to be Works of Supererogation, as well as of *Supernaturalization.*

Third, Ananias went his Way, entered the Houſe, put his Hands on him, and ſaid, *Brother* Saul, *the Lord, even Jeſus that appeared unto thee in the Way as thou cameſt, hath ſent me, that thou mighteſt receive thy Sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghoſt. And immediately there fell from his Eyes as it had been Scales; and he received Sight forthwith. Ananias* Fibs; for how did the *Lord Jeſus* appear to *Saul* by the Way? The only Thing that is ſaid to appear to *Saul* was *a great Light*, that's all he ſaw; for as ſoon as the Light came, it ſtruck him down, and blind; therefore *then* he could ſee nothing; and when he got up, he opened his Eyes, and *ſaw no Man*; he could not ſee at all, not ſo much as the Road at Noon-day: Therefore *Saul* ſaw *not Jeſus* by the Way; though, 'tis ſaid, † *Barnabas took him, and brought him* to the Apoſtles, *and declared unto them, how he had ſeen the Lord in the Way.* It ſeems as if *Ananias* and *Barnabas* were privy to *Saul*'s Viſion, and knew more of it than *Saul* did; which looks ſuſpicious

* Acts ix. 11.

† Ibid. 27.

that they were deep in the Secret: But this *honourable Gentleman* aſſures me they were not; and, as I think, he knows no more than I do of the Matter; I believe him not *leſs* than the Goſpel itſelf; I fear to affront Believers by ſaying *more*; beſides, I am not uſed to ſacrifice the Truth by Flattery; and if I attempt to imitate St. *Ananias*, St. *Barnabas*, or St. *Paul*, I ſhall not be look'd on by thoſe that read me as a *Saint* of that Claſs.

As for the *Scales that fell from his Eyes*, I ſuppoſe they might have been preſerved in the holy *Roman* Church as a ſacred Relict, and Proof againſt *biblical Infidelity*; but that they would have made all thoſe blind that could ſee them. I don't read that which converted *Saul* had Power to convert any of his Comrades; and 'tis very remarkable, that thoſe who were not made blind could not believe; and that the Way *to walk by Faith* is *not* to walk by *Sight*.

It may be objected, that *Saul* ſaw *Jeſus* by the Way, becauſe he, in telling us who ſaw Chriſt after his Reſurrection, ſays, *Laſt of all he was ſeen of me alſo, as of one born out of due Time.* I anſwer, that *Saul* ſaw *Chriſt* by the Way is not confeſſed by theſe Words, which do not ſignify he ſaw him any more than *once*, and that he ſays * *was in the Temple as he was praying, and in a Trance*, and then perhaps it was that he thought 500 Brethren ſaw him too, becauſe perhaps there might be 500 there. By the Account St. *Paul* gives of his own Converſion, to the *Galatians*, *Chriſt* appeared to him inwardly; *when it pleaſed God to reveal his Son in me*, and many of St. *Paul*'s *Apes* have therefore thought they have had *Chriſt in them alſo*.

XXVII. *Of* Paul's *being guilty of Perjury.*

St. *Paul* to perſuade the *Galatians*, † that the Goſpel he taught was all by Divine Inſpiration, writes thus, *When it pleaſed God, who ſeparated me from my Mother's Womb, and called me by his Grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Heathen, immediately I conferred not with Fleſh and Blood, neither went I up to* Jeruſalem *to them that were Apoſtles before me; but I went into* Arabia *and returned again unto* Damaſcus. *Then after three Years I went up to* Jeruſalem *to ſee* Peter, *and abode with him fifteen Days: But other of the Apoſtles ſaw I none, ſave* James *the Lord's Brother. Now the Things which I write unto you, behold, before God I lye not.* Now though he ſwears that he does not lye, I believe *before God* that he ſwears to a lye, and that there is no Dependance for Truth in theſe ſacred Stories. He adds, *Afterwards I came into the Regions of* Syria, *and* Cilicia, *and was unknown by Face unto the Churches of* Judea, *which were in Chriſt; but they had heard only, that he which perſecuted us in Times paſt, now preacheth the Faith which he once deſtroyed, and they glorified God in me.*

If other Accounts of Chriſtian Hiſtory are true, this of his going into *Arabia*, and not ſeeing the Apoſtles is falſe. The ixth. xxiid. and xxvith. Chapters of the *Acts* tell us of his Converſion, and where he went afterwards. In Chap. ixth. 19, *&c.* after *Saul* had

* Acts xxii. 17, 18.

† Gal. i. 15, *&c.*

had received his Sight, 'tis ſaid, *He was certain Days with the Diſciples that were at* Damaſcus, therefore that *he* immediately after *conferred not with Fleſh and Blood* is not true. The Hiſtorian goes on, *and ſtraightway he preached Chriſt in the Synagogues, that he is the Son of God. But all that heard him were amazed, and ſaid, is not this he that deſtroyed them that called on this Name in* Jeruſalem, *and came hither with that Intent, that he might bring them bound unto the Chief Prieſts? And* Saul *increaſed the more in Strength, and confounded the* Jews *that dwelt at* Damaſcus, *proving that this is very Chriſt. And after many Days were fulfilled, the* Jews *took counſel to kill him. But this laying in wait was known of* Saul, *and they watched the Gates Day and Night to kill him. Then the Diſciples took him by Night, and let him down by the Wall in a Baſket; and when* Saul *was come to* Jeruſalem *he aſſayed to join himſelf to the Diſciples, but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a Diſciple. But* Barnabas *took him and brought him to the Apoſtles, and declared unto them how he had ſeen the Lord in the Way, and that he had ſpoke to him, and how he had preached boldly at* Damaſcus, *in the Name of Jeſus, and he was with them coming in and going out at* Jeruſalem. Therefore it is not true what he ſwears to, that *he ſaw none of the Apoſtles but* Peter *and* James *at* Jeruſalem. For the Hiſtorian adds, *and he ſpake boldly in the Name of the Lord Jeſus, and diſputed againſt the* Grecians; *but they went about to ſlay him; which when the Brethren knew, they brought him down to* Ceſarea, *and ſent him forth to* Tarſus.

It is neceſſary to make this long Quotation for the Sake of the whole Connection, that you may ſee, *Theophilus*, how it agrees with what he writes to the *Galatians*, and ſwears to the Truth of: And that there is not the leaſt Reaſon to believe, according to this Hiſtorian, he was abſent *three Years* in *Arabia*, between the Time of his going from *Damaſcus* to *Jeruſalem*; for had it been ſo, the Diſciples at *Jeruſalem* muſt long before that Time have known he had been an accepted Diſciple at *Damaſcus*, and that he had preached *Jeſus* there; and not ſo long after have been afraid of him as not a Diſciple, and needed *Barnabas*'s Information of it, then, or his Recommendation to them. Therefore it appears he went directly to *Jeruſalem* from *Damaſcus*, and there was received by, and had the Converſation of the Apoſtles. But ſuppoſing contrary to all this, that he had been before in *Arabia*, ſtill what St. *Paul* ſwears to is falſe, or the Hiſtory of him is falſe; that *he came afterward to* Jeruſalem *to ſee* Peter, *and abode with him fifteen Days, without ſeeing any other Apoſtle but* James. Which Story, as it is in itſelf very unlikely that he ſhould be at *Jeruſalem* with *Peter* fifteen Days, and ſee none but him and *James*, ſo it is contrary to the Hiſtorian, who ſays, *he aſſayed to join himſelf to the Diſciples*, and when they, being ignorant of what had happened, feared to receive him as a Member, he was recommended to them by *Barnabas, and he was then coming in, and going out with the Diſciples at* Jeruſalem, and there preached *Chriſt* openly, and boldly. Yet this Saint con-

tradicts all these Things, tells them another Story, and swears to it, *before God that he lies not*; but if what he swears to is true, the Historian's Account is opposite to Truth: And yet these Contradictions are called *the Oracles of sacred Truth*, and *the Word of God*. But is not this blaspheming the Word of God, and belying Things true and sacred to call them so? He who swears to a Lie, does not by swearing make it true, nor can he be the more believed for so doing, when the Truth is proved to be directly contrary to what he affirms. The Nature of Things cannot be altered by their Names, nor Facts by false Testimonies.

But I have not done yet, I have more Witness to produce against St. *Paul*'s Affidavit, more *Christian Evidence* attesting to St. *Paul*'s Words, before a Court of Judicature, against St. *Paul*'s Words to the *Galatians*——Before King *Agrippa* and *Bernice*, *Festus*, the chief Captains and principal Men of the City of *Cesarea*, *Paul* after declaring to them the manner of his Conversion proceeds thus. *Whereupon, O King* Agrippa, *I was not disobedient to the heavenly Vision, but shewed first unto them of* Damascus, *and at* Jerusalem, *and throughout all the Coasts of* Judea, *and then to the* Gentiles, *that they should repent, and turn to God, and do Works meet for Repentance: For these Reasons the* Jews *caught me in the Temple, and went about to kill me.* You see, *Theophilus*, that this Apostle preached first by his own Confession at *Damascus*, and at *Jerusalem*, before he went to the *Gentiles*, if this *Christian Historian* be true. Had it been otherwise, would he not have said rather, that he shewed first to them at *Damascus*, and *Arabia*, then at *Jerusalem*, and throughout all the Coasts of *Judea*, that they should repent, *&c.* Now what Credit ought to be given to a Man that contradicts himself, and swears to the Truth of a Contradiction? In all the Account of his Peregrination in *the Acts of the Apostles*, (or rather *the Acts of the Apostle* Paul) I do not find he went at all into *Arabia*, nor does it appear he was ever there, unless he was in the Desert of *Arabia* when Satan buffeted him, for a little before the Devil served him in a very rude manner, he knew not where he was; and probably he might be in *Arabia* in a Vision. It was to be sure the Abundance of Visions and Revelations that made him abundantly forgetful. And some I fear will say that the Buffetings of Satan had beat all Truth out of his Head. God forgive those that are so uncharitable to so *true a Saint*, and make them see the Truth. Far be it from me, *Theophilus*, to say these Things made him an Enthusiast, but too much supernatural Grace destroys the natural Man. As the Light that surrounded him in his Travels to *Damascus*, being greater than that of the Sun, put out his bodily Sight, so it would any Man's in the World, unless prevented by a miraculous Power. But these Things made our poor Brother *Paul*'s Head weak; for when the Nerves of the human Frame are too much stretched by the heavenly Powers, they must needs afterwards suffer more than common Relaxation, and Debility, not recoverable by their natural elastic Force;

Force; or their being always upon the Stretch cauſed him to be always equally as poſitive when he was wrong as right, if he was ever right.

XXVIII. *Of Saints who were by Practice Sinners, and* Paul *one of them.*

Every Man has his natural Vice or Infirmity, and ſome are addicted to more than one. I do not ſay that *Saul* was among other human Frailties addicted to Lying, but ſometimes very much to forget himſelf, and make very unhappy Miſtakes. But the Saints have their Failings, and the Mercies of redeeming Grace redeems them from the *Guilt*, but not the *Soil* of Sin, which is all covered over with the *white Robes of Chriſt's Righteouſneſs*, were it not for this, which alone makes them to differ, we ſhould ſee no Difference between Saints and Sinners; and might imagine that thoſe Saints who waſh their Robes in Blood, are bloody Saints; not Underſtanding how red Blood waſhes white: This is a Myſtery to crimſon Sinners. But the Sins of Saints create in them Humility, which is the firſt Mark of ſaving Grace: So the Lord lets his Beloved fall, to make them ſenſible he does not hold them: Therefore the Lies of Believers are juſtified, but the Truths of Unbelievers are condemned. 'Tis certain one would more ſoftly paſs over the Failings of the Saints, or Believers, as well as they would conceal their own, knowing human Nature, but that the Believers ſo wickedly defend the greateſt Vices of biblical Saints, when plaiſtered over with a Pretence of Sanctity, or Commiſſion from God; and ſo unmercifully condemn them for Infidels who contend for Truth only, and repreſent them as Contenders for Vice and Immorality. Since therefore theſe narrow-ſoul'd Monopolizers of Righteouſneſs will *Lie*; it becomes thoſe that love Truth to ſpeak, which it is plain the greateſt Believers have the leaſt Regard to. Lies have been always practiſed for the Sake of Chriſtianity, and the good of the Church: Whether it be agreeable to the revealed Will of the Goſpel, or not. And Truth has been always perſecuted where Faith has been propagated, and eſtabliſhed with Rigor. Faith is always taken on truſt; Truth is found by Diſtruſt and Enquiry.

I do not call *Paul* a *Deceiver*, but to be believed he ſometimes ſolemnly affirms he does not *lye*; which Thing alone is ſufficient to diſpoſe one to fear he was addicted to *Lying* and Deceit. It is certain he did not always ſpeak Truth, but ſometimes endeavoured to *deceive* others; therefore if the Chriſtian Religion ſtands on this Bottom, it ſtands on a very deceitful one.

For before the Chief Captain, Chief Prieſts, and Council at *Jeruſalem* when *Paul* was to plead for himſelf, * and *perceived that one Part of the Multitude were Sadducees, and the other Phariſees, he cried out in the Council, Men and Brethren, I am a Phariſee, the Son of a Phariſee, of the Hope and Reſurrection of the Dead, I am called in Queſtion.* Though this was a

* Acts xxiii. 6.

crafty Stratagem to deliver himſelf from the High Prieſt's Examination, and ſo it did; yet he aſſerted two Falſhoods, *Firſt*, That *he was a Phariſee*; and *ſecondly*, That *for the Hope of the Reſurrection he was called in Queſtion*: Which ſhews he did not ſo much regard the clearing of Truth, as the clearing of himſelf. But it may be, the *pale-faced High Prieſt*, who looked like the Image of Death, might terrify him; and by the *hurly burly* at Court he might be hurried out of his Senſes, and forget himſelf and the Matter of his Accuſation; and that he had owned that he was a Chriſtian to the Multitude but the Day before. Did thoſe Jews that knew *Paul* (think you *Theophilus*) believe this was the Conduct of an Enthuſiaſt, or an Impoſtor? Now let ſome modern Saint, or Believer daub over the Sins of the antient Saints, and palliate or juſtify thoſe Vices in them, or in themſelves, that they righteouſly condemn in others, according to their wonted and abundant Grace, and gracious Partiality.

XXIX. *Of* Paul's *working a Miracle at* Lyſtra, *and the* Lyſtrans *Treatment of him.*

Tho' the foregoing Accounts ſhew that *Paul* ſometimes affirmed what was not true, and that with a Deſign *to deceive others*, and muſt have done ſo in his extravagant Flights aforementioned, unleſs he was himſelf deceived, or beſide himſelf; yet I do not ſay he was an *Impoſtor*. But it is very much to be feared, the *Iconiums* thought him ſuch at *Lyſtra* *, or their Conduct is not to be accounted for; firſt to eſteem him as a God for working a Miracle; and not long after, to ſtone him, and leave him for dead. There was a Cripple whom *Paul* perceived *had Faith to be healed*, that is, he was in the Secret. If he had not been in the Secret of Faith he could not have been cured. What is this but † *an apt Diſpoſition in the Perſon on whom the Miracle is wrought*, as the Gentleman calls it; tho' he ſays, ‡ *no ſuch Diſpoſitions were to be found in the Gentiles, and as at* Lyſtra *the Heathens were not led into the Secret of the Means of working Miracles, they imputed it to their Gods*. Here we find that ſuch a Diſpoſition was found among the Gentiles; and as we are told, God does not ſaves us whether we will or no; ſo this ſhews that God does not work Miracles on us, whether we will or no. We muſt come into the *Diſpoſition* or *Secret of the Means* to have them wrought. This almoſt leads us into *the Secret of the Means of working Miracles*, which they that are not led into, may impute to their gods. Thoſe that wrought Miracles as they could not always work them, nor upon all Occaſions, ſo they were forced to work them when they could, when a proper Opportunity offered, or not at all. This ſeems to have been the Caſe at *Lyſtra*, otherwiſe the People ſhould have been firſt informed by Wiſdom, before they had been amuſed by ſtrange Power, that they might have known the End and Deſign of the Miracle; they ſhould firſt have delivered their Goſpel-meſſage, opened

* Acts xiv. 8, *&c.* † Obſ. p. 57. ‡ Ibid. 59.

pened People's Underſtandings, let them know from what God they came, and upon what Errand, that the God *Jeſus* had deſired the Honour of their Worſhip, and to that End was willing to oblige them by doing ſome ſingular Favour, to diſplay his Power, that they were required to pull down their old gods and put up a new one, or whatever their Meſſage was; and then produced their Credentials in Confirmation of it. But not doing this, *Paul* and *Barnabas* confirmed the People in their old Idolatry. I ſuppoſe the Cripple had not Patience to wait, and they feared if they did not cure him quickly, he would cure himſelf, the Conſequence of which might be the crippling them, if *the Means* of working the Miracle had been expoſed. They not rightly preparing the People for the End of the Miracle, the People had no Notion of the coming of any new god; or that any ſuch had been *born* lately; therefore they thought their old gods were come again to pay them a Viſit, and hoped by their Readineſs to honour them, they would do more Miracles among them. When they ſaw the Cripple leap up and walk, at the Command of *Paul*; *they lift up their Voices, ſaying, the gods are come down in the Likeneſs of Men.* They took *Barnabas* to be *Jupiter*, being, I ſuppoſe, the more perſonable Man, and *Paul* to be *Mercury*, being the beſt Prater, *and the Prieſts of* Jupiter *brought Oxen and Garlands, and would have done Sacrifice unto them, and ſcarce could they reſtrain the People* from doing it, by declaring they were not gods. The very next Thing we read is, that *there came thither certain Jews from* Antioch, *and* Iconium, *who perſuaded the People, and having ſtoned* Paul, *drew him out of the City, ſuppoſing he had been dead. Howbeit, as the Diſciples ſtood round about him, he roſe up, and came into the City, and the next Day he departed with* Barnabas *to* Derbe. Here was a Miracle performed in vain, by not going the right Way to work. 'Tis eaſier to make a Mob ſtare, and gape, admire and adore, than underſtand. *Paul* had Power to work a Miracle, to make a Cripple dance, but not to preſerve himſelf from being ſtoned. So devout a People could never have been perſuaded by the Jews from other Parts to ſtone one whom they took to be a god, and would have worſhipped, for miraculouſly healing a Cripple; unleſs theſe Jews perſuaded them it was the Work of *Impoſture*. When there is Reaſon to ſuſpect falſe Dealing in Pretenſions to Miracles, the Honour Men had for the Pretender is turned into Contempt; and the more Devotion their Credulity raiſed, the greater they think is their Diſgrace for their Folly; and conſequently the greater will their Reſentment be to the Impoſtor that occaſioned it. The next Day, inſtead of ſtaying to work any more Miracles there, he and *Barnabas* thought it beſt, as bruiſed as he was, to march off.

XXX. *Of* Paul's *Conteſt with* Elymas, *and making him blind.*

In the Iſle of *Paphos* they found one *Barjeſus* with the Deputy of the Country, a Jew, whom they call a *falſe Prophet* and a *Sorcerer*, who a little after is called *Elymas*, and

and ſaid to be a *Sorcerer* only by the Interpretation of his Name, who endeavoured to prevent the Deputy from becoming a Chriſtian Convert. For this Reaſon to prove that Reproach and Slander is common to Saints, *Paul fixing his Eyes on him*, that is, plucking up a bold Aſſurance, and ſtaring him out of Countenance, ſaid, *O full of all Subtilty and all Miſchief, thou Child of the Devil, thou Enemy of all Righteouſneſs, wilt thou not ceaſe to pervert the right Ways of the Lord?* And ſo, that he might *ſee* they were the right Ways of the Lord, he made him *blind: For a Seaſon* it is ſaid, but how long that Seaſon laſted is not ſaid; ſo a Man may be made blind by throwing Sand or Duſt in his Eyes. In what manner it was done, or if true, I know not; but if *Elymas* reaſoned well, why did *Paul* rave? If he reaſoned ill, why did he make his Body blind, inſtead of enlightening his Underſtanding? Why did he take away his Sight to make him ſee the Truth? *Elymas* could not be full of *all* Miſchief, for *Paul* was full of ſome, in making him blind; which if true, I believe was done by ſome other Power than that of Words: For I cannot think the wiſe God lent his Power to *Paul* to execute as his Paſſions pleaſed. *Elymas* might by ſome Accident loſe his Sight for ſome Time, and thoſe that were willing to make a Miracle of it, aſcribed it to *Paul*'s doing; but he darkened his Eyes inſtead of illuminating his Mind, as this Story tells us. And indeed *Paul* could work any Miracle but that. Is this *turning Men from Darkneſs to Light?* Is it not plain that *Elymas* was too hard for *Paul* in Argument, that he ſet him a raving, not a reaſoning. But reaſoning was not *Paul*'s Talent, he was too hot to reaſon coolly, and had too many Starts and Emotions to proceed regularly; he appears for the moſt Part to be plunged in too much Puzzle and Obſcurity, to judge deliberately, and deliver himſelf clearly.

Ac 13.10

XXXI. *Of* Paul's *Expulſion at* Antioch *and* Iconium, *and his falling out with* Barnabas.

What is the Reaſon that at *Antioch*, the Place of their flouriſhing moſt, * *the devout and honourable Women, and the chief Men of the City* were againſt theſe holy Men, *Paul* and *Barnabas, and expelled them out of their Coaſts.* This was not done by Ruffians, and a raſcally Mob; nor could theſe prevail on Perſons of ſuch Character to do it. All the Reaſon given for it is, that the Jews ſtirred them up to it. This Duſt is caſt in our Eyes, to prevent our ſeeing the Truth. I imagine that *Barnabas* got little Credit by being *Paul*'s Companion, and ſometimes ſuffered on his Account. It could not be the preaching of Morality that ſtirred all Places up againſt him, wherever he went, and ſo often obliged him to ſhift Quarters. It was not Morality that brought him ſo often into the Pickle of Perſecution; for neither the Precepts of the Goſpel, nor the Practice of Chriſtians, have any Thing ſuper-excellent in them. In moſt Places that *Paul* went to, Diſturbances roſe about him,

* Acts xiii. 50.

him, as if his turbulent Spirit, which he had before his Converſion, ſtill remained; for the People ſeemed principally to aim at getting rid of him, and having ſo done were contented.

If Signs and Wonders were done by *Paul* and *Barnabas* at *Iconium*, as we read, how came there to be * *an Aſſault made both of the* Gentiles, *and alſo of the* Jews *with their Rulers to uſe them deſpitefully, and to ſtone them*; which to avoid, they fled to *Lyſtra* and *Derbe*. Their Power of working Miracles never ſtood them in any Stead for their Defence when they wanted it moſt, ſo Gypſies pretend to tell Strangers their Fortune, but know not their own. They were always ſafeſt when they run for it, and choſe rather to truſt to a natural Conveyance of their Perſons, than to a ſupernatural Power for their Preſervation. By what they knew they had done, they knew what they had to do; and generally made off in Time,

At *Antioch*, *Paul* and *Barnabas* who had long traded apoſtolically in Partnerſhip, notwithſtanding they were poſſeſſed of the peaceable Spirit of the Holy Ghoſt, fell into ſuch bitter Contention, that *Paul* parted from *Barnabas*, who had brought him into Favour with the Apoſtles, and Credit with the Chriſtians, and ſet up for himſelf. The Occaſion was frivolous enough whether they ſhould take *John Mark*, or *Silas* to wait on them; this ſhews us of what furious bitter Spirits the Propagators of Chriſtianity were, that the moſt trifling Differences rent them into irreconcileable Schiſms. But *Paul*, who would give Place to no Man, took *Silas*, and left *Barnabas* to take *Mark*; of whom we hear no more. The Writer being *Silas*, or one of *Paul*'s Party, who after this, and not before, when he writes of *Paul* and himſelf, writes in the firſt Perſon plural, *we* and *us*, and could not be *Luke* the Evangeliſt, as it is pretended, becauſe his laſt Account of Chriſt's Aſcenſion, and that in the *Acts* do not agree; as is obſerved in the Reſurrection conſidered †.

'Tis inſinuated that theſe Writings contain the Truth of Facts, becauſe they bewray the Weakneſs of the Writers, or Perſons written of. Is it any Wonder that Men who are not wiſe, diſcover their want of Wiſdom? or that Men who would be cunning in every Thing, are out in many Things? No doubt but they tell ſuch Circumſtances they could not well avoid; and with Deſign to tell thoſe Things in ſuch Manner as might cover their own Faults, as well as they could. And to be ſure, there was no *Impoſture* in the Caſe; becauſe they were not weak enough to confeſs it; for as they confeſſed other Weakneſs, they would no doubt have ſimply or honeſtly confeſſed *that* too, had they been guilty of it!

XXXII. *Of* Paul's *circumciſing* Timothy.

St. *Paul* at *Lyſtra*, or *Derbe*, circumciſes *Timothy*, becauſe *the* Jews *in theſe Quarters knew his Father was a* Greek, notwithſtanding he delivered at the ſame Time, to the ſeveral Churches in the Cities he paſſed thro', the Decrees of the Apoſtles and Elders at *Jeruſalem*,

* Acts xiv. 5, 6.

† Ibid. 48.

lem, which he and *Barnabas* had procured, that the gentile Converts were not required to be circumciſed, nor to keep the Law of *Moſes* only * *to abſtain from eating Meats offered to Idols, and from Blood, and from Things ſtrangled, and from Fornication*; and notwithſtanding the ſame *Paul* teſtified to the † *Galatians*, that *if ye be circumciſed Chriſt ſhall profit you nothing*, that *every Man who is circumciſed, is a Debtor to do the whole Law*, that *Chriſt is become of no Effect unto you, whoſoever of you are juſtified by Law, are fallen from Grace*. Yet this temporizing Apoſtle was willing at that Time rather to pleaſe the Jews, and that Chriſt ſhould profit *Timothy* nothing, than that the Jews in thoſe Parts ſhould not profit *Paul*. Ah! poor *Timothy*, thy Soul and Body were at thy *Father Paul*'s Diſpoſal, but thou waſt cut off from Chriſt for *Chriſt's Servant's Sake*, and he could graft thee in again, for *Paul could do all Things thro' Chriſt that ſtrengthened him*, and *ſay* them too. If it was a Point that concerned Man's Salvation, which it muſt have been if *Paul* declared the Truth, that *if you be circumciſed, Chriſt ſhall profit you nothing*. How could he dare to circumciſe *Timothy?* For either this was a lying Declaration, or the circumciſing *Timothy* was an Action that gave his Doctrine the Lye: It muſt have been falſe and deceitful one Way or another. It may be I ſhall be told that the Words mean, whoſo dependeth on Circumciſion and the Law for Juſtification, could not be juſtified by Chriſt. But then why did *Paul* do that he declared againſt? why countenance that Superſtition and falſe Faith which deprived Men of the Benefit of Chriſt? Is not this compounding with Error, and plaiſtering the Believers up with Deceit. If he had declared it an indifferent Thing, it had not deſerved this Cenſure.

XXXIII. *Of* Paul's *Spirit, Viſion, and Devil.*

‡ *After they were come to* Myſia, *they aſſayed to go into* Bythinia, *but the* Spirit *ſuffered them not*. I wonder how it hindered them, and what *Spirit* it was; for St. *Paul* was no Enthuſiaſt. *And* Paul *and* Silas *paſſing by* Myſia, *came to* Troas, *and a* Viſion *appeared to* Saul *in the Night*; *there ſtood a Man of* Macedonia *and prayed him, ſaying, come over into* Macedonia, *and help us. And after he had ſeen the Viſion, immediately we endeavoured to go over into* Macedonia, *aſſuredly gathering that the Lord had called us to preach the Goſpel unto them*. A *Spirit* hinders their going one Way, and a *Viſion* directs them another, and yet St. *Paul* was no *Enthuſiaſt*, nor did he act the *Impoſtor*, to ape the *Enthuſiaſt*: To the *Theſſalonians* he writes, § *we endeavoured more abundantly to ſee you with great Deſire*; *therefore we would have come unto you, but* Satan *hindered us*. What were they obliged to aſk Satan's Leave? or were they under the Dominion of Satan? *Paul* was not a Match for Satan, but the Devil's Power was ‖ too hard for him, whom he deifies to encounter; how could he then *turn Men from the Power of Satan to God*, when himſelf was turned

* Acts xv. 29. † Gal. v. 2, 3, 4. ‡ Acts xvi. 7, 8, 9, 10.
§ 1 Theſſ. ii. 1, 7, 18. ‖ 2 Cor. iv. 4.

turned by Satan from ſeeing the *Theſſalonians*, and from the Service of the Goſpel among them, tho' *he endeavoured more abundantly to do it with great Deſire.* But in this Age, we don't underſtand what a Spirit, or a Viſion, or Satan is.

XXXIV. *Of* Paul's *delivering the fortune-telling Maid of the Devil.*

At *Philippi* in *Macedonia*,* *it came to paſs* (ſay they) *as we went to Prayer, a certain Damſel poſſeſſed with a Spirit of Divination met us, which brought her Maſter much Gain by Soothſaying*; *the ſame followed* Paul *and us, and cried, ſaying, Theſe Men are the Servants of the moſt high God, which ſhews unto us the Way of Salvation. And this ſhe did many Days. But* Paul *being grieved, turned and ſaid to the Spirit, I command thee in the Name of Jeſus Chriſt to come out of her*; *and he came out the ſame Hour.* This ſhews that *Paul* was a ſpiritual Man-midwife. If this was a *good Spirit*, as if it ſpoke Truth one would take it to be; if it directed the People to *Paul*, and *Paul* to Chriſt, it was a kind of preaching the Goſpel; and if that be *good*, why did St. *Paul* caſt it out, or ſtifle it? If it was an *evil Spirit*, was not Satan's Kingdom divided againſt itſelf, and he neceſſitated to ſet up the Power of *Chriſt* to the Deſtruction of his own, and preach himſelf out of the World? Why then was he ſilenced? I ſhall be anſwered perhaps, that the Devil was crafty, he preached up the Faithful only that he might expel them and the Faith together. Alas! the poor Saints were always too weak for *the ſtrong Man armed*, for they never ſcuffled with him, but he buffeted them, and they came off with the worſt of it. They had always the worſt Fortune when they had the Fortune to work Miracles. This Damſel brought her Maſter *much Gain* by Soothſaying. But tho' it was a *hireling Spirit* in other Caſes, it was to be ſure none in this, for the Hiſtory does not ſay ſhe was hired for ſo much a Day to preach up *Paul* and his Companions; only that *ſhe followed them and cried, theſe are the Servants of the moſt high God, that ſhew unto us the Way of Salvation.* The Goſpel Spirit is a diſintereſted Spirit, even in the Devil himſelf! We are not to conceive that this ſoothſaying Spirit was hired to be ſilent when commanded, nor that the Maid was ſilent when ſhe received no more Hire: But whatever was the Cauſe, when the Maid was mute the Maid's Maſter broke Silence, and ſung another Tune; the Devil's Maſter grew more troubleſome than the Devil; for when her Maſter ſaw that the Hope of their Gains was gone, *they caught* Paul *and* Silas, *and drew them into the Market-place, unto the Rulers, and brought them to the Magiſtrates, and raiſed the Multitude againſt them.* What the Maid's Maſter ſaid, we are not told, yet as we do not read, that they laid *Bribery* and *Corruption* to their Charge, there is no Proof of it. The Magiſtrates and Multitude thought them guilty of ſomething; for they cauſed them to be beat, and put in Priſon, but they got their Liberty, being *Romans*, upon Condition they would walk

* Acts xvi. 16, 17, 18.

walk off; for *they desired them to depart out of the City*, and so were content to get rid of them. These *Saints* would never let the *Devil* alone, though he seemed *almost a Christian*, and preached the Gospel. How haps it, some may say, there are no such Devils now? Alack and a well a-day! there's many a Devil preaches the Gospel now, but they are not pointed at, nor disturbed, and so the Gospel and their Interest agree very well together; for the Devil is only a roaring Lion, when he is disturbed, and raises Persecutions when he is persecuted. Let him alone in his *Den* and his *Living*, and he's quiet enough; for to be sure the *Devil* is not without Passion, being contrary to God who has none. *When the Sons of God met together* in old Time, * *Satan came also among them*, and he will be among the *Saints*, let them do what they will, and that they know; for his Pride sometimes induces him to keep good Company. If they would let him quite alone, so as to regard him no more than if he was not, he would not be; but would certainly die of a Consumption, as the Witches have done, since annulling the Act of Parliament against Witchcraft; for he is never more alive, than when he is most opposed.

XXXV. *Of* Paul's *Expulsion from* Thessalonica *and* Berea, *and quitting* Athens.

Reports fled from Town to Town after *Paul* and his Attendants wherever they came; so that they could not abide long in a Place. They passed through † *Amphipolis* and *Apollonia*, and came to *Thessalonica*; there in a short Time *all the City was set in an Uproar*. *Jason*'s House was assaulted, where the Saints lodged, and the Saints were sought for, the People and *the Rulers were troubled*, and *having taken Security of* Jason, &c. they let them go. And the Brethren immediately sent away *Paul* and *Silas* by night. Why, what was the Accusation? What! why *they had turned the World upside down* wherever they went, by saying, *there was another King, one Jesus*, whom they knew nothing of, nor believed, or feared, that's all the Reason the History gives.

From *Thessalonica*, they go to *Berea*; they had not been long there before *Satan* heard of them, and found them out; the Jews of *Thessalonica* followed them, and stirred up the People to drive them away. The Saints were innocent, for here's nothing laid to their Charge. *Then immediately the Brethren sent away* Paul *to go as it were by Sea, but* Silas *and* Timotheus *abode there still*. Paul was the principal Person whom Uproar followed. *Paul* was conducted to *Athens*, there he (an unknown Man) begun to talk of an unknown God, and while he spoke philosophically they gave Attention, but when he dropt the Philosopher, the Philosophers dropt him, as soon as he begun to tell them what unknown God he meant, the Man God Christ Jesus, they called him a Setter-forth of strange gods; they burlesqued his Doctrine and called him a Babler, as if he prated more than reasoned; 'tis no Wonder if he, a Despiser of Wisdom, attempting to philosophize,

* Job i. 6. † Acts xvii. 1.

phize, could not hold it, that not being his Talent, he could not reconcile their Philoſophy (of which he had ſome Smattering) with the unknown God he held forth to them; they were too inquiſitive, a Diſpoſition always deſtructive to Faith: So he left them, to ſeek a People more prone to believe, and of leſs curious Enquiry; for there he made no great Hand of it, that was no Place for him to ſtay in.

XXXVI. *Of* Paul's *working at his Trade, his Humility and Diſintereſtedneſs.*

From * *Athens*, our travelling Apoſtle goes to *Corinth*, where falling in with Brethren of the ſame Trade, he ſo far mortified himſelf as to work with them, of which Humility he boaſts not a little in an Epiſtle to thoſe People; wherein he tells them, that † *thoſe who preach the Goſpel ought to live of the Goſpel*; *but*, ſays he, *I have uſed none of theſe Things, neither have I written theſe Things, that it ſhould be ſo done unto me; for it were better for me to die, than that any Man ſhould make my Glorying void.* If he could not live without glorying or boaſting, where was the wonderful Humility of his Working, when he did it on Purpoſe to boaſt of. At another Time he ſays, ‡ *What is it wherein ye were inferior to other Churches, except it be, that I myſelf was not burdenſome to you? Forgive me this Wrong.* Taunting Humility! *Behold the third Time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be burdenſome to you; for I ſeek not yours, but you.* He knew if the latter be found, the former follows. Tho' he boaſted of working, which by the Way is a Sign he worked but ſeldom, yet he did not live altogether by his Work. He inſults them on this Head. § *Have I committed an Offence in debaſing myſelf that you might be exalted; becauſe I have preached to you the Goſpel of God freely? I robbed other Churches taking Wages of them to do you Service; and when I was preſent with you and wanted, I was chargeable to no Man; for that which was lacking to me, the Brethren which came from* Macedonia *ſupplied; and in all Things I have kept myſelf from being burdenſome to you, and ſo will I keep myſelf. As the Truth of Chriſt is in me, no Man ſhall ſtop me of this Boaſting in the Regions of* Achaia. This ſhews how much it was his Humility that made him work, and not his proud Stomach to boaſt of it afterwards; and that there was no Policy in it, but all was ſimple Honeſty, as he ſeems willing to have it underſtood. ‖ *I did not burden you, but being crafty, I caught you with Guile*; meaning ironically with honeſt Labour and inoffenſive Simplicity. Notwithſtanding all his boaſted Labour, his Work did not maintain him, for upbraiding them with Neglect he ſays, *† *I am glad of the coming of* Stephanus *and* Fortunatus, *and* Achaicus, *for that which was lacked on your Part, they have ſupplied.*

If he had no Pay at *Corinth*, no Prieſt can plead a Right to it better than he does; and 'tis likely he wrought at his Trade that he

* Acts xxiii. † 1 Cor. ix. 14, 15. ‡ 2 Cor. xii. 13. § Ib. xi. 7, 8, 9.
‖ Ib. ver. 16. *† 1 Cor. xvi. 17.

he might do it the more freely, that they might make him the larger Purſe next Time. He is an admirable and artful *Beggar*, as may be ſeen in the viiith. and ixth. Chapters of his ſecond Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*; to which I refer you, *Theophilus*, at your Leiſure, and to *Philippians* iv. 10. to the End. To the *Romans* he writes, * *It hath pleaſed them of* Macedonia *and* Achaia *to make a certain Contribution for the poor Saints that are at* Jeruſalem; and that it was their Duty ſo to do. *It hath pleaſed them verily, and their Debtors they are, for if the Gentiles have been made Partakers of their ſpiritual Things, their Duty is alſo to miniſter to them in carnal Things.* He recommends to the *Corinthians* † alſo the Example of the *Macedonians*; others he directs, ‡ *Let him that is taught in the Word communicate to him that teaches in all good Things.* || *If we have ſown unto you ſpiritual Things, is it a great Matter if we ſhall reap your carnal Things? As they that miniſter about holy Things live thereby, ſo they that preach the Goſpel, ſhould live of the Goſpel.* Such like Doctrines and Precepts he delivers, whereby 'tis evident, that if he was not paid for his ſpiritual Wares, he reckoned them in his Debt; and that he did not take up Preaching to labour at his Trade, but expected to live by Preaching, and found it no doubt a more profitable Occupation than Tent-making, and more fit for his arrogant and rambling Diſpoſition. And it ſeems to me he had ſome Crumbs of Comfort from them before he ſent his *ſecond Epiſtle*, what elſe mean theſe Words? § *You alſo helping together by Prayer for us, that the Gift beſtowed upon us by the Means of many Perſons, Thanks may be given by many on our Behalf.*

He laboured alſo at *Theſſalonica*, where he ſtaid but three Weeks, to teach them what they ought to do for him. ** *Your ſelves know how you ought to follow us, for we behaved not diſorderly among you, neither did we eat any Man's Bread for nought, but wrought with Labour and Travel Night and Day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you. Not becauſe we have not Power, but to make ourſelves an Example unto you to follow us*, &c. But if he did work among them, he ſeems not to have ſent *Timotheus* of a Fool's Errand; for it does not ſeem that he came back empty handed. †† *When I could no longer forbear* (*Paul* tells them) *I ſent to know your Faith, leſt by ſome Means the Tempter have tempted you, and our Labour be in vain. But now when* Timotheus *came from you unto us, and brought us good Tidings of your Faith and Charity*, &c. *we were comforted*, &c. and he had Supplies ſent him while he was there from *Philippi*; for he tells them, that *in* Theſſalonica *you ſent once and again to my Neceſſity.* So that if he found Occaſion to boaſt, he could find little Occaſion to grumble; for though the Workman is worthy of his Hire, if he labours honeſtly, and does his Work well, yet it ſeems in this Caſe, that thoſe who never hired him paid him Wages; or his Caſe had been a poor Caſe.

XXXVII.

* Rom. xv. 26, 27. † 2 Cor. viii. 9. ‡ Gal. vi. 6. || 1 Cor. ix. 11, 13, 14. § 2 Cor. i. 11. ** 2 Theſſ. iii. 7. 8, 9, 10. †† 1 Theſſ. iii. 5, 6, 7.

XXXVII. *Of the Miracles* Paul *wrought at* Corinth.

As to Miracles, St. *Paul* tells the * *Corinthians* concerning himſelf, *truly the Signs of an Apoſtle were wrought among you in all Patience, in Signs and Wonders, and mighty Deeds*; but theſe were performed *in* them, not *without* them; for he threatens, † *If I come again I will not ſpare, ſince ye ſeek a Proof of Chriſt ſpeaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you.* If the Miracles done by him were outward, viſible, or known; why did ſome of them ſeek a Proof of his Miſſion? What other Proof would or could they have? And why does he write thus, but to chide them out of Countenance in doing it? If they ſought a Proof, what Signs and Wonders had he done? Was not this Reprimand to make them aſhamed of demanding Proofs as could not be given? Surely it was a Proof of his Power to do Wonders, if many of them believed without any Proof! towards ſuch, *his Power was not weak, but mighty in them*; and that to them was Proof enough. We read not of any Miracle he did at *Corinth*, by his Hiſtorian, *Acts* xviii. though he ſtaid there a Year and ſix Months, and longer, only that he had an *encouraging Viſion* in the Night. If there had been any greater Miracle done worth Notice, I ſuppoſe it would have been taken Notice of, but when the Hiſtorian works no Miracles, the epiſtolary Writer does; what is wanting in Deeds, is made up in Words. Perhaps had he wrought any Miracles there, he had not ſtaid ſo long, for Miracles never anſwered their End, nor were ever attended with reaſonable Succeſs.—If ever God wrought any Miracles to mend Mankind, he has as much Reaſon to repent his mending Works, as ever he did his creating Works ‡ in making Man.

XXXVIII. *Of the Holy Ghoſt.*

Let me, *Theophilus*, juſt ſtep aſide to pay my Reſpects to the Holy Ghoſt, and I ſhall come to Miracles again by and by. At *Epheſus*, *Paul* found certain Diſciples that had not yet found the Holy Ghoſt, they were ſo wholly unacquainted with him, that they had not heard whether ſuch a Being had Exiſtence, they confeſſed *they knew not whether there was any Holy Ghoſt*; but *Paul* had him in his Hands, therefore, when he laid his Hands on theſe ghoſtleſs Believers, they were electrified by the holy Fire, or the Holy Ghoſt dropt into their Heads, and ſat upon their Tongues, ſo *that they ſpake with Tongues and propheſied*; that is, they ſpake the Myſteries of the Spirit, for the Tongue of the Holy Ghoſt is Prophecy. They had, beſides their own Tongue or Dialect, which was common, and intelligible, this, which was uncommon to thoſe that ſpoke, and unintelligible to thoſe that heard; ſo they ſpake with *Tongues* and propheſied.

The Holy Ghoſt was, according to the new Manifeſtation of it, a *bodily Being* §, which could appear in one or many diſtinct Bodies, at

* 2 Cor. xii. 12. † Ib. xiii. 2, 3. ‡ Gen. vi. 6.

§ It is the Spirit of a Body no doubt, according to the *Roman* Clergy; for they

one and the ſame Time. At *Penteco ſt* it came *like the ruſhing of a mighty Wind*, and appeared on the Head of each Speaker *like a fiery cloven Tongue*. I wonder theſe ignorant Believers had never heard of it; it is a Sign that this Wind made no great *ruſhing* without Doors, and though it blows where it liſts, it did not liſt to blow in every ones Ears; Believers, who were the next Door Neighbours to them that had the Spirit, knew nothing of it: It deſcended in a bodily Shape like a Dove on the Head of Jeſus when he was baptized, which none but *John* the Baptiſt ſaw, though many People came to his Baptiſm. There is not a Word of the Holy Ghoſt in all the Old Teſtament: There is Mention made of the Holy Spirit, as a Nature, or Quality, but not of the Holy Ghoſt, as a bodily Thing. The firſt Account we have of it was, when the Angel *Gabriel* came a courting of *Mary* by Proxy for the Holy Ghoſt, he tells her *, *the Holy Ghoſt ſhould come upon her and overſhadow her; therefore the holy Thing that ſhould be born of her ſhould be called the Son of God*, and therefore that which was ſaid *to be conceived in her was of the Holy Ghoſt*. And ſince the Holy Ghoſt made ſo free with Man's Nature, I think we may make a little free with his; for if a King ſo far demeans himſelf to go a begging, ſure a Beggar may then converſe freely with a King: Excuſe therefore, *Theophilus*, my Freedom with this human Holy Ghoſt. It was a new Thing never made common 'till Jeſus was glorified, and ſent by him on the Apoſtles as his Deputy; and though more dreadful Judgments are denounced againſt thoſe that ſpeak lightly of it, than thoſe that blaſpheme God himſelf, yet I find no where in Scripture that this Holy Ghoſt is a God; if any, it is an inferior Deity, a kind of Divine *Mercury*, I ſuppoſe ſubſtituted by Chriſtians inſtead of the Heathen one; for when they threw the Pagan Gods out of Heaven, and made Devils of them all, they filled up the vacant Seats in Heaven with Gods of their own making: And this, for aught I know, may be the true Meaning of *Lucifer*, *Satan*, or the *Dragon* and his Angels warring in Heaven, and being in heavenly Battle vanquiſhed, and thrown over the Battlements into the bottomleſs Pit. If ſo, what *Chriſt* ſays, *I ſaw Satan fall like lightening from Heaven*, muſt mean that he ſaw it in the Spirit of Prophecy; and it muſt be in this Senſe only that the Goſpel has conquered *Satan*, and routed the Devil and his Angels; and their falling from Heaven then, means from the Places of Worſhip, and the Veneration paid them by Men; and being caſt into Hell, is into Contempt and Obſcurity. But as for the other Sort of Devil, *Sin*, Orthodox Chriſtianity has uſed it with great Compaſſion, as a tender

they tell us, that *whoever are ſent by the Church, are ſent by the Holy Ghoſt*. Annot. on the New Teſtament of *Rhemes*, p. 116. So that the Holy Ghoſt is nothing but the Spirit of Holy Mother Church; and therefore, p. 158, The ſpiritual Man is he that judgeth and diſcerneth by the Spirit of the Church, the Truth of ſuch Things as the carnal Man cannot attain unto: And the carnal, or ſenſual Man, is he that meaſureth heavenly Myſteries by natural Reaſon, human Prudence, and external Senſe.

* Luke i. 13.

a tender Mother, not overlaid and ſtifled it, like a negligent and careleſs Nurſe. Theſe two Siſters *Sin* and *Folly* never had a better Friend in the World than Faith; and therefore their children are the Choſen; for *Chriſt came into the World to ſave Sinners, of whom*, ſays our bouncing Apoſtle, *I am Chief.* And he ſays, *God hath choſen the fooliſh Things of this World*, &c. of whom Believers are the Chief; for *by the Fooliſhneſs of Preaching*, 'tis ſaid, *he ſaves them that believe.*

You may think, *Theophilus*, I have loſt Sight of the Holy Ghoſt, becauſe I am entertaining myſelf with *Faith*, but I cannot look upon the Child without having the Parent in my Eye. This bodily Holy Ghoſt is ſaid to dwell in *Jeſus* more eminently than in any other Perſon, and therefore it is called the Spirit of *Chriſt*, and is ſaid to dwell alſo in thoſe that are Chriſt's, and ſo Chriſt is ſaid to dwell in them; which ſeems to be the unravelling the ſpiritual Myſtery of Chriſtianity. But this Dwelling is only by Faith, and is only known by Faith; therefore thoſe that have not this Faith, know not whether there is any Holy Ghoſt, and take it to be only Chimera.

For my own Part, I don't know if there be any Holy Ghoſt, or what is meant by it, and imagine now I never had it, though once I thought I had been plunged in it, and not merely ſprinkled; if ever I was baptized with this holy Water, it has been long ago all dried up; but if ever I drank of it, I have it ſtill, becauſe I never thirſt for it; for it is ſaid, *he that drinketh of this Water ſhall never thirſt*; but thoſe that fancy they every now and then drink of it, are always as thirſty as if they drank of the Salt Sea: therefore 'tis a Riddle to me what this Fountain of living Water is; for they that have no Faith cannot want it, and they that have Faith never deſire any. You ſee Believers did not know their want of the Holy Ghoſt 'till it was put into their Heads.

Since the Holy Ghoſt is by free Gift, and cannot be bought or ſold; for when *Simon Magus* would have bought ſome of it, *Peter* ſaid to him, *Thy Money periſh with thee, becauſe thou thinkeſt the Gift of God can be bought with Money.* And yet ſpiritual Merchandize has been in the Church! Now, *Theophilus*, methinks I ſee the Reaſon *why*, and the Time *when* the Holy Ghoſt and the Power of working Miracles forſook the Church; it was as ſoon as the Church was guilty of ſpiritual Traffic and *Simony*, and that's almoſt as ſoon as it was a Church; St. *Paul* thought it reaſonable to take carnal Things for Spiritual; bartering Goods for Goods is to the ſame Effect as ſelling for ready Money. I own, that where there is not Payment in Money, barter ſeems fair; unleſs it be fairer to ſell Faith upon Credit, and ſo barter Faith for Faith, which has a juſt Semblance of Value for Value. But there is another Way the Holy Ghoſt may be loſt, and that is, when a Man or Church is ſo profane as to bartar it away for Reaſon and common Senſe. Then, O then, go Faith and the Holy Ghoſt together! This is ſelling one's Birthright for a Meſs of carnal Pottage! Theſe are ſpiritual *Edo-*

mites! But the reſigning all human Qualifications at the Footſtool of Faith and the Holy Ghoſt, *to deſire to know nothing but Chriſt, and him crucified*, with this humble Apoſtle, is to be a ſpiritual *Iſraelite*; but I am of a more aſpiring Mind, deſiring to know Chriſt and him glorified; for if he is only to be known crucified, not riſen again, and aſcended into glory, *your Faith is vain*, Theophilus, *and you are yet in your Sins.*

XXXIX. *Of* Paul's *miraculous Handkerchiefs and Aprons.*

We are told that at *Epheſus, ſpecial Miracles were wrought by the Hands of* Paul; which is not to be wondered at, as he had got the Holy Ghoſt in his Hands; and that *from his Body were brought unto the Sick Handkerchiefs or Aprons, and the Diſeaſes departed from them* *. Here we have the *Means of working Miracles*, but ſuch *Means* as ſhew the Story of them to be a Thumper. Some Virtue elſe ſeems requiſite beſides the Aprons, Handkerchiefs, or Napkins to be wrapt up in, or go along with them: Something then they carried off from *Paul's* Body. I want to know how long theſe Aprons or Handkerchiefs muſt have been with holy *Paul* to be thus impregnated with this healing Quality? And how long the Diſeaſed wore them before they were cured? Where they applied them? And how? Whether this Wonder-working Saint gave them away at his own Charge, or at the Charge of the Church? How many he might carry about him on ſuch an Occaſion? Whether he had always this Power, or only at certain Times? Whether, a Handkerchief or an Apron could cure more than one? Whether, if handed about by many People, it might not loſe it ſalubric Virtue by the Way, before it reached the Sick it might be deſigned for? Whether they received it mediately, or immediately from *Paul's* Body? Whether it cured inſtantly, or in Time? Whether *Paul's* Body was any Thing more liable to Diſeaſe for parting with ſo much medicinal Power? Whether he received them from the Sick, and returned them back again? How long the holy Effluvia abode on the Apron or Handkerchief? What Operation it had on the Sick? Whether a pure Quality could lodge with Dirt, Excrement and Corruption? Whether the phyſical Property contained in theſe Aprons and Handkerchiefs remained after an Emunction, or reſiſted Sweat, or could ſtand a Lather? Whether, if the Diſeaſed loſt the Handkerchief or Apron, there was not Danger of the Diſeaſe returning? Since here is no Mention made of the Holy Ghoſt, I will not ſuppoſe any Part of *that* was wrapt up in them, or ſtuck to them. Alas I am at a Loſs, in all theſe Caſes, and many more, to underſtand the Nature of the Thing. Well, what we cannot conceive, we muſt believe! O holy

* St. *Chryſoſtom* (tom v. contra *Gientiles*, in vita *Babylæ*) ſheweth in a whole Book to that Purpoſe againſt the *Pagans*, that by the like Virtue of other Saints, their Relicts have done like Wonders, not only in their Life-time, but after their Death. This alſo he inſinuates by the Shrine of St. *Babylas*. All *Romiſh* Antiquity is pregnant of ſuch romantic Teſtimonies; contrary to the Nature of God, of Man, of Things, and of common-Senſe.

holy Mother Church! How ſacred are thy Relicts!

XL. *Of certain Quack-conjurers and the Devil.*

At *Epheſus* the Quack Miracle-mongers were ſnapt. I will tell you the Story *verbatim*, *Theophilus*; for 'tis Pity any of it ſhould be loſt. The Hiſtorian writes, * *Then certain of the Vagabond Jews, Exorciſts, took upon them to call over them which had evil Spirits in the Name of the Lord Jeſus, ſaying, we adjure you by Jeſus, whom* Paul *preacheth. And there were ſeven Sons of one* Seva *a Jew, Chief of the Prieſts, which did ſo. And the evil Spirit anſwered and ſaid, Jeſus I know, and* Paul *I know; but who are ye? And the Man in whom the evil Spirit was, leapt on them, and overcame them, and prevailed againſt them; ſo that they fled out of that Houſe naked and wounded.* Theſe new Conjurers are ſaid to be Vagabond Jews, and yet ſeven Sons of a High Prieſt, which don't tally, however it is no doubt as true as the reſt of the Story. They are called *Exorciſts*; if ſo, they were very young unſkilful Practitioners in the Art; and therefore I ſuppoſe them to be Boys at Play, being all Brothers; and that they were going to act a Comedy, in order to burleſque St. *Paul*, which turned out an unexpected Sort of a Tragedy to them, but a Chriſtian Farce. The Boys perhaps found a Boor to begin to practice on, that had odd Fits, whom they expected ſome Game with. I find the Man would not be made their Laughing-ſtock, he handled them roughly, and tore all the Cloaths off their Backs; but I ſuppoſe they did not all ſtay to be ſtript; I warrant you there was a little Skirmiſh for ſome Time; ſeven to one is Odds, and ſeven is a holy Number too; I wiſh we had more Particulars of it. Thus it turns out, ſuppoſing the Devil had no Hand in it; but now put the Caſe he acted a Part, let's ſee how it will come forth then? The ignorant poor Rogues did not call over the evil Spirits perhaps by their proper Names, nor had led them into the Secret of their Deſign; and beſides, the evil Spirits knew by their Manner of Addreſs, theſe were not the right Folk that belonged to *Paul* and *Jeſus*: *We adjure you*, ſay they, *by Jeſus whom* Paul *preacheth*; the Devil knew by that, they were no Preachers of *Jeſus*, and conſequently might be Impoſtors; and ſo rouzing up his brimſtone Courage, he proved them to be. He anſwers, *Jeſus I know, and* Paul *I know*. How came this evil Spirit ſo well acquainted with thoſe good Perſons? *What Communion has Light with Darkneſs; or he that believes with an Infidel*; or the Saints with Satan: But *who are ye?* It is ſtrange too the Devil knew not his own Folk, and ſhould tare his own People in Pieces! This is Satan divided againſt Satan, the Devil grown mad! The old Man pulling down his own Houſe on his own Head! If the evil Spirit had not got into a ſturdy raw-bon'd Fellow, he could never have play'd his Part ſo well. Theſe ignorant Bunglers had not led the evil Spirit into the Secret of their Deſign, therefore the Devil had a Mind to ſpoil

* Acts xix. 13, 14, 15, 16.

the Sport of thoſe that were not rightly initiated. 'Twas enough to ſtartle the *Devil* to come upon him all at once, without any ſuitable Warning, *We adjure you by Jeſus whom* Paul *preacheth*. Names enough to frighten the Devil! And but that he ſmelt a Rat, or rather the Rat Devil ſmelt a Trap; and therefore for the Preſervation of his own Liberty, he had a Mind to conteſt the Point and put his Power to the Proof. The Devil was diſpoſed te have a Trial of Skill for it, or as it were a Trial at Law, and the Devil Defendant won the Cauſe, nonſuited the Plaintiff's Party, made them pay Coſts, and kept Poſſeſſion of the Premiſes. Theſe young Attorneys in the ſpiritual Court attempted to plead the Plaintiff's Cauſe without Fee, but Satan knew ſuch Practice would ruin the Law, and make the Goſpel vile, or perhaps he had no great Regard for Law or Goſpel, but lookt upon theſe young Bravo's as a Parcel of *Wapping* Sollicitors; and was determined not to be made a Fool of by thoſe that underſtood neither Law nor Goſpel; reſolved to ſpoil their Trade of Devil-catching in Time, and not permit any Interlopers. For if the evil Spirits ſuffered themſelves to be impoſed on by every one that pleaſed to uſe the Name of *Jeſus* and *Paul*, they might not in Time find a Body to put their Heads in, nor be able to ſleep in a whole Skin; therefore they wiſely crampt theſe Pretenders in their Beginning, that they might ſtand upon Record for an Example to others; for Satan knew the *Saints* would pen it down, as their own Advantage, againſt Invaders not commiſſioned by proper Authority, tho' it really turns out to the Devil's Advantage. Here one of *Paul*'s *Handkerchiefs*, or the *Shadow* of *Peter* * was wanting. It ſeems the Devils had been greatly diſturbed, and their Power weakened in the Time of *Jeſus Chriſt*, he having given univerſal Toleration to all that would annoy him, and beat him out of his Intrenchments; and all his ſtrong Holds: But after his Death the Enemy recovered his Spirit, and feared none but the *Holy Ghoſt*; having no potent Adverſary in the World but him; he knew *Paul* was not of that tolerating Spirit that his Maſter was, but like holy Mother-church, and High Churchmen, that would not have Diſſenters caſt out the Devil, but had rather the Devil ſhould caſt out Diſſenters; and that Men go not to Heaven at all, than not go their Way: Being willing to ſide with the Devil for their own Advantage. And indeed all the Apoſtles were greater Friends to Satan than their Maſter was; they in his Time † met with Men *that caſt out Devils in the Name of Chriſt, and forbad them* ſo to do; *becauſe they followed not them*, the Diſciples were for Conformity. But *Jeſus Chriſt* allowed of Non-conformity to thoſe that did not formally follow him; for when they told this Story to their Maſter, they received a Check for checking others *forbid them not*, ſaid he, *for there is no Perſon who does a Miracle in my Name, that can lightly ſpeak Evil of me*. So *Chriſt* we ſee granted *a univerſal Toleration*; and there is nothing can more

* Acts v. 15, 16.

† Mark ix. 38, 39.

more recommend *Chriſt* to Infidels than ſuch a Spirit, for they are dear Lovers of religious Liberty, and therefore the trueſt Proteſtants, as they moſt ſincerely proteſt againſt that Church which is itſelf in Bondage, and the greateſt Promoter of Slavery in the World; making Slaves of the Souls of Men.

They early begun the Tyranny and Craft of Book-burning. *Many alſo of them that uſed curious Arts brought their Books together, and burned them before all Men, and they counted the Price of them, and found it fifty thouſand Pieces of Silver* *. Reſolved at all Events, that none ſhould have to do with the Devil but themſelves. Thus they have endeavoured to ſtifle all Evidence againſt their own Fraud, under Pretence of preventing the Frauds of others †.

XLI. *Of Miracles aſcribed to* Paul *which were none, and of his Peregrination to* Rome.

Dancing after this Apoſtle has almoſt tired me, *Theophilus*, therefore I haſten to a Concluſion. Going from thence thro' ſeveral Places, he came to *Troas*. The Chriſtian Church then often met in an upper Room, tho' now they have got down into the firſt Floor with great Pagan Pomp, and are as ſtrongly intrenched as the ſtrong Holds of Satan. However, then in this high Church they could afford a great many Lights. There was one *Eutichus*, a Youth, ſat in the Window, a drowſy Hearer, and *Paul* being a long-winded Preacher, *Eutichus* dropt out of the Window; the Fall ſtunned him, ſo that the People below thought he was dead; but *Paul* went down and embracing him found him alive, and ſaid, *Trouble not yourſelves, for Life is in him.* At length he came to himſelf; and this is ſet down by *Paul*'s Champion for a Miracle; and ſo is that of his ſhaking a Viper off his Hand without ſwooning, ‡ tho' it never bit him; who alſo ſays, that *Paul always preached Jeſus Chriſt, and not himſelf*; but I think, in many of his Epiſtles, he *preaches himſelf*, eſpecially at § *Miletus*, if ever any Man did. But notwithſtanding the Commendation St. *Paul* gives himſelf, I have already proved, that all Things which he ſaid are not true. Then he tackt about to *Jeruſalem*, there he prevaricated in his Conduct, and *in order to gain the Jews he became a Jew*, tho' he had preached and practiſed Gentiliſm among the Gentiles; which Piece of Hypocriſy had like to have coſt him his Life. What the Jews thought of him on this Account I leave you, *Theophilus*, to judge for yourſelf. They dealt a little more ſourly

* All heretical Books are by this Example conſigned to the Flames, by Mother-church, and have been ſo in all Ages. The Chriſtian Emperors, *Conſtantine*, *Valentinian*, *Theodoſius*, *Martian*, *Juſtinian*, made penal Laws for the burning or defacing them, to prevent their being read. So terrible is Heterodoxy and Unbelief, that the beſt Way of anſwering it, has always been by Fire, which deſtroys all *Reaſon*, that more *accurſed Thing* to the *Spiritual* Iſraelites, than *Achan*'s Wedge of Gold and *Babylonish* Garment was to the *Carnal* Iſraelites.

† Acts xix. 19. ‡ Ibid. xxviii. 3, 4, 5. § Ibid. xx. 17, &c.

with him than the Gentiles did; for by their Means he was brought many Times to the Bar, and imprison'd, and could not get clear, but by appealing to *Cæsar*. Thro' many troublesome Travels and Voyages, he arrived at *Rome*; where he enjoyed free Toleration for Preaching in a hired House of his own, for two whole Years. How long he lived beyond that Time? what became of him afterwards? when, or where, or how he died; they that would know, may go to *Rome* and enquire; and there they'll be told as much Truth about him, as he told about himself. And as *Rome* appears to us to be the last Place he was at, he was doubtless *Bishop at* Rome, and left his Spirit to the Church behind him, tho' the Church *Lyes*, as it has ever done, in saying *Rome* was *Peter*'s See; but they have *Room* enough to lye there as they please, so they do but lye within the Pale of the Church.

XLII. *Recapitulatory Considerations.*

Upon Examination it appears, that the History of St. *Paul* wants both the Authority of good Testimony and Reason to make it pass current with those that see for themselves. What is fit to be generally esteemed true History, should have the general Esteem of Mankind as such; and not that of bigotted Believers only. Facts that will not bear Examination ought no more to pass current, than Coin that will not bear the Proof. Little Truth is to be given to those Stories, that are taken upon Trust by those that have not the Spirit of Discernment. That Story which wants the Probability of Truth, cannot prove the Probability of another Story, or of a Doctrine equally improbable. If different Parties on one Side, give each other the Lye; who that is of neither Party, can believe any of them? What Foundation have the Moderns to new Stamp the Face of Authority on ancient Writings, which the Ancients themselves rejected? If we had *Roman* History, which had been condemned by *Romans*, we should scarce think it worthy the Credit of *Britons*. Why must we confide in those that have handed Stories down to us, who in their own Time were not to be believed for their Knavery? When Stories look more like Romance than Truth, where is the Crime for taking them for what they appear to be? or where is the Wisdom or Virtue of receiving them as Truth? What can better discover the true Value of Things, than their own intrinsic Worth? and how can a true Estimate be known without it? Can there be a greater Mark of Madness, Infatuation or Delusion, than for a Man to glory of seeing or hearing what he can give no Account of, and when at the same Time he owns, that he knew not whether he had his Senses? Or what can be a greater Mark of Deceit and Vanity, than to boast of extraordinary romantic Favours, to be esteemed an extraordinary great Man? Is it a Sign of a Man's Meekness, or Humility, or of his being possessed with a blessed Spirit, that would curse an Angel from Heaven who dared to contradict what he asserted? Is he implicitly to be believed without Contradiction, who has the Spirit of

of it both in Words and Works? How great does his Faith appear to have been, who owned he *ſtood by Faith*, and yet was *in danger of falling?* How does his Diſintereſtedneſs for lucrative Gain appear, who leaves a poor honeſt laborious Trade, for a more gainful and eaſy Occupation; and Prieſt-like, inſiſts on *their* Payment, as his Dues, who never hired him? And how does his Humility appear, who leaves an humble Employ to make himſelf Head of a Sect? Is he to be praiſed for his Holineſs, whoſe whole Life is a Scene of Contradiction? The giddy-headed Man, that changes from one Sort of Superſtition to another, tho' he may be called a Convert, is not the better Man. If the ſame turbulent Temper appear as before, the Man is not more holy by his Converſion. If he have not the ſame Power as before, he can't do the ſame Things, and then the Converſion is not in the Man, but in his Circumſtances. He that is of a reſtleſs Diſpoſition, will diſturb others of their Reſt as much as he has Power to do it. He that will diſſemble and lie, and deceive, and curſe, and ſwear, and forſwear, may be eſteemed a very pious *Saint*, but is a very immoral Man. Who and what is an Enthuſiaſt, if he that is conducted by Dreams, Viſions and Inſpirations, by a Spirit and by Satan, is not? And if Stories that contradict themſelves are true, what are falſe? If Men will ſtrive to make Contradictions look like Truth; by Wire-drawing them to a ſeeming Reconciliation; what will they not ſay to gain a Point; what Iniquities will they not palliate, what bad Cauſe will they not plead to make their own good? Can the indiſcreet Stories of Miracles paſs for the Works of the God of Wiſdom? Is it conſiſtent with his Conduct to interfere in a wonderful manner, to make reaſonable Men wonder he ſhould ſo interfere, working Miracles oftentimes to no Purpoſe, and ſometimes one Miracle to cure the Defects of another? So miſerable are the Stories of Miracles, that as they reflect on the Wiſdom of God, ſo they as ſtupidly repreſent the Workers of them miſerable, and thoſe that are inveſted with ſuch mighty Power, notorious Examples of Imperfection and Weakneſs. Whatever Wonders they are reported to have done Abroad to others, they did nothing wonderful at Home for themſelves; but all their Miracles rather tended to make them Marks of Miſery. Now and then we are entertained with the Relation of miſchievous Miracles, to ſhew us how the Workers of them went about doing Good! Whatever Holy Ghoſt is in the Heads of thoſe that pretend to poſſeſs him, their Hearts are full of Feuds and Factions; as it was in the Beginning, ſo it is now, and ever will be Enthuſiaſts, without End. *Amen.*

'Tis not the pretending to the Perfection or Direction of an imbodied God, can remove or conceal the Imperfections of a Man. Exorciſms, Conjurations, and Witchcraft, are Deeds of Darkneſs; the Stories of them only ſhew the Ignorance of the Age in which theſe Things were pretended to be done; whereby we may know how eaſily People were impoſed

poſed on, and need not wonder at the great Succeſs of the conjuring Clergy. But the Chriſtians, good Men, had no Hand in theſe Cheats! They indeed were ſaid to *turn the World upſide down*; but then it is to be ſuppoſed, that was becauſe the World was the wrong Side upwards before, and the People were ſo obſtinate, they would not let the Saints ſet it in the right Poſition, who came to mend the World; ſo the World did every Thing evil to, or wrong by, them, rather than permit them to ſet the World right. But the working of Miracles ceaſed after the Apoſtles Time, becauſe when their Maſter ſaw that Power in the Hands of Fools, he took it away to prevent their doing more Miſchief with it than Good. And now ſeeing we have no Miracles given to guide us, we are not to be guided by them, but by what we have, that is, by the *Reaſon* God has given us; it having been found by Experience, that Ignorance and Miracles are miſerable Informers and Reformers of a miſinformed World: And no wonder, for would it not vex a good Being to ſee Miracles carried about in Handkerchiefs, and Aprons full of Miracles handed about, by which Means they might be proſtituted to vile Uſes, and be applied to the Cure of mangy Dogs and meaſly Swine; Actions forbidden in the Goſpel, *Give not that which is holy to Dogs, neither caſt your Pearls before Swine.* It was proper therefore a Stop ſhould be put to ſuch male Practice, which is doubtleſs Sacrilege; and 'tis now proper we ſhould have no Miracles. From the Recital of the Words and Works aſcribed to our Hero Saint, by his Followers and Advocates, it appears how much they turn out to the Advantage of his Character, and clear up the Evidence, Credit, Purity, Excellency, and Truth of the Chriſtian Revelation. Now let us compare this Divine Light (as it is called by Divines) with the natural Light of human Reaſon, and ſee which is moſt properly *the Light of the World*, and I have done, *Theophilus*, for this Time.

XLIII. *Of Reaſon and Revelation.*

This honourable Author ſays, that in *Deiſm itſelf, the moſt ſimple of all religious Opinions, are ſeveral Difficulties for which human Reaſon can but ill account; which may therefore not improperly be ſtiled Articles of Faith.* He may ſtile them as he pleaſes, but a *Deiſt* is not bound to any Articles of Faith of another Man's making; he is to believe only what appears right to his *own* Reaſon. And he is not to be ſaved by his Belief, if it be really right; nor to be damn'd, if he unluckily believe what is wrong. He only ſubſcribes in his own Judgment to this Article, That he muſt account for Things in the beſt Manner his Reaſon is able to do; and where that fails, acknowledge his Weakneſs in Things unneceſſary to be known, or above his Capacity to know; and not expect to comprehend all Nature; nor reject what Truths he can comprehend for thoſe he cannot; nor is he to receive *any* Thing for Truth, becauſe he cannot conceive *every* Truth. And if Revelation be ſubject to the ſame Caſualties, or Conſequences that Reaſon is, 'tis *not better*; if it inform

inform us no clearer, 'tis *as dark*; if it be as liable to be misunderstood, 'tis as *dim*; if it don't open our Understandings, so as to make us argue more clearly, and on a better Foundation, *'tis not a greater Light*. How is it then given to enlighten the Dimness of our Reason? If it need Reason's Assistance to explain it, 'tis *weaker*; if it confound our Reason, 'tis *worse*; if it have not plainly the Advantage of Reason when compared with that alone, 'tis *not a greater Light*; or if Reason have the Advantage of Revelation when so compared, Revelation is a *less Light*. If we can know nothing truly by Revelation without Reason, Revelation is *no true Light at all*. If we keep Men of the best Sense and Learning in constant Pay to explain and defend Revelation, and yet they can do neither, when opposed to Reason only: What Sort of a Light is it? If the Expounders cannot agree amongst themselves in Essentials not depending on Reason, or know what the Essentials are; how essential is it? If they cannot display their boasted Revelation to be glorious in itself, worthy of God, entirely true, perfectly plain and easy to be understood, intrinsically pure, just, consistent and harmonious, that the Doctrines and Precepts it contains, all naturally tend to make Men wiser, better, and happier; it seems to want the Proofs of a divine Original; and if it has not done so, it seems to have been given in vain; and so not the Revelation of perfect Wisdom; and if proper Proofs are wanting of its being so, all that enquire and judge for themselves, and that are capable of judging of the Reason and Fitness of Things, will conclude it to be no extraordinary Light; and that nothing more is necessary to direct the Faith and Practice of Men, than adhering in Judgment to *Reason only*, freed from all Enthusiasm and Imposture, and in Practice to *virtue alone*, freed from all Superstition.

In all Countries, and among all Religions, there will be always some Enquirers, Free-thinkers, Philosophers and Deists, but Credulity and Enthusiasm are such strong Ingredients in the Composition of human Nature, that they will never be all such. Rational Principles suit reasonable Men only. The Majority of every Nation will always be of that Church which is propagated by Education, and established by Law and Custom: Therefore the Craftsmen need be in no fear of their great *Diana*. Any Religion, in any Country that teaches good Morals, if practised with a good Heart, will make a good Man; which neither enthusiastic Faith, nor superstitious Worship among them all will do; and there is little Faith or Worship in the World, to which Enthusiasm and Superstition are not joined: Therefore those Christians of the most moral and rational Parties among us, are as fit, by their *Rationality*, (not by their *Revelation*,) to direct Men in their Duty and Behaviour as any other that I know of in the World, with this Difference, that while we enjoy the greatest Freedom in the World, our Constitution is in that Respect the best in the World. And all reasonable Men agree, that *Virtue* is of the utmost Benefit to Mankind, and that the right Understanding of it is the Path to Peace, Freedom, and Happiness.

THE

THE PREFACE, BY WAY OF POSTCRIPT.

READER,

THIS Epiſtle to thee follows in natural Order, being almoſt always written laſt, tho' ſtanding firſt; I write as thou readeſt, for my own Satisfaction, to find out what is faultleſs, or to find fault; to inform, and to be informed; for the Rocks that others have ſplit on, are the Land-marks we ought to beware of. To know if a Man be truly wiſe, we ſhould enquire what Follies he has been guilty of; or if honeſt, what Knavery; or if holy, examine his Conduct; this is more or leſs needful, as it is of more or leſs Conſequence. The more any Thing is expoſed, it will be examined the more. This is the preſent Caſe reſpecting St. *Paul*; the honourable Author of, *The Obſervations on his Converſion and Apoſtleſhip*, has elevated his Character, and made the Superſtructure of Chriſtianity depend upon it, and has indeed acquired by it as much Glory as the Nature of the Subject permits, nor do I envy his Fame. But unleſs Things as they are repreſented are to be implicitly received, it can be no Error to examine into Errors for the Truth's Sake; and ſince *the Weapons of our Warfare are not carnal but ſpiritual*, let who will attack me with my own Weapons, I beg no Quarter; for begging Quarter is craving Indulgence in Error, which let the ſtrongeſt Reaſons detect and deſtroy. The Strength that is not tried is not known. Let Men rouze themſelves, and not imagine that Security lies in Indolence. I thought myſelf well acquainted with the Apoſtle *Paul* before this Examination, but muſt own, I was not half ſo well as ſince; for in examining the Hiſtory of him, more Light ſprung up than I expected. The Fruits of my Labour, *Reader*, are preſented to thy View, with Scripture uncorrupted by Explanation in the Front, that at one View the whole Account of St. *Paul*'s Converſion may be ſeen, to ſave thy Trouble in often ſeeking the Text in different Places. I have only tranſpoſed one Verſe, as you will ſee was neceſſary to do, and that it has not altered the Senſe.

If Chriſtianity is not eſſentially Enthuſiaſm, wherein does the Eſſence of Chriſtianity conſiſt? Or wherein is the Diſtinction between that, and the Religion of Nature? If Chriſtianity be only natural Re-

Religion, why does it not naturally appear to be ſo; and why do Chriſtians contend with thoſe that would have it ſo? But if Chriſtianity has not its Foundation in Nature, is it not Enthuſiaſm? For what is Enthuſiaſm, but the Belief and Practice of ſuch Things as are ſupernatural? And what are Things ſupernatural but ſuch as are not in Nature, or do not ſpring from Nature, nor are taught by Reaſon; if Chriſtianity be purely natural and rational, what need had Man to be taught it by ſupernatural Means; for Nature is unchangeable, and at all Times manifeſt to thoſe that have Induſtry enough to ſeek what ſhe informs, Courage ſufficient to call in Queſtion popular Errors, and natural Abilities to diſtinguiſh the true Light of Nature from ungrounded Hypotheſes, gilded Deceit and falſe Pretenſions. Theſe Things were never paſt ſeeing by ſome in every Age and Place, though ſeldom ſafe to diſcover. To free Men therefore from the Danger of ſpeaking Truth, is to be a greater Redeemer than divulging Truth to Men. If Chriſtianity teaches to believe and act Things contrary to Nature, is it not Enthuſiaſm? The Baſis of the Chriſtian Religion conſiſts in believing Chriſt roſe from the Dead; *(for if Chriſt is not riſen, your Faith is vain.)* Is not to believe him riſen from the Dead, to believe an Action that is contrary to Nature? Is not the Trinity a Doctrine contrary to Reaſon and Nature? And to believe that any Man who was ever born, was *the only-begotten Son of God*, by his Spirit's *overſhadowing a Woman*; that God can be Man, or Man God, that *all Power is committed to Jeſus Chriſt, in Heaven and in Earth*; (for 'tis contrary to Reaſon and Nature, to believe that the Father hath diveſted himſelf of all Power, and given it to the Son; or that the Father and the Son are one.) What is it leſs to believe, that the Sacrifice of Chriſt ſhould atone for the Sins of Men; that 'tis impoſſible for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, therefore to get there they muſt part with all they have; that it is adviſeable Men ſhould make themſelves Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven's Sake; that we ſhould hate our neareſt and deareſt Relations and Friends and our own Lives for Chriſt's Sake, and the Goſpel's; that we ſhould love our Enemies; that we ſhould depend on God, and take no Thought for the Morrow; and ſuch like, which ſeem to me to be the diſtinguiſhing Eſſentials of Chriſtianity, and inſeparable from Enthuſiaſm, becauſe the Belief and Practice of ſuch Things are contrary to Reaſon and Nature. If theſe are not the Laws of Chriſtianity, nor Enthuſiaſm, I wiſh they were better diſtinguiſhed.

The Reflections I have caſt on Faith, is to be underſtood of traditionary, unexamined, ſuperſtitious, enthuſiaſtical and erroneous Faith, ſubſtituted for Righteouſneſs; not of that Faith in God, which is productive of good Works, of the Faith which works by Love. All the Faith in God that is neceſſary, is to have that Faith in God which is neceſſary for our Obedience; and all the Obedience required of us, is to love God and our Neighbour; for in this is comprehended the

whole

whole Law of God; and to love God, is to love those Properties or Attributes we believe to be in God; or to love the Laws of God, that is, such Laws as tend to the Good of Man, which are fit for Man to believe and practice, *viz.* the Belief of Things naturally reasonable, and the Requirings of a reasonable Nature. This is true Faith and Obedience: For we know nothing of God, but by Faith, the Knowledge of God being a philosophical and speculative Consideration; therefore every Man is to believe for himself, according to the Light and Judgment God has given him: For an adequate Notion of God is inscrutable to all Mortals. In Things concerning only God and Man, Man is accountable only to God. *What hast thou to do to judge of another's Servant? To his own Master he standeth or falleth.* And as for Things concerning Man and Man, this Rule is given us, *Whatsoever ye would that Men should do to you, do ye even so to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets*, Matth. ii. 12. That is, this is all that God by Revelation requires: This is the Sum and Substance of all Religion. This comprehends all the Law of God by his Prophets; this Answers all their Ends and Aims, but they that have other Ends have intermixt other Things with it, and made it miraculous and mysterious, that they might amuse and deceive.

By what has been said it appears, that true Religion is not built upon Fables, nor upon *Paul* or *Peter*, nor on what this or that Man says or pretends; but on the Nature and Necessity of Things, on Obedience to God, according to Men's Faith in him as their Reason directs them; and in Obedience to Man, as the Law of Man, and in Man, directs to Man's reasonable Obedience, in Things not appertaining to God; thus every Man will serve *God* in sincerity, and *Man* with honesty, and Religion will not be a Cloak for Knavery and Inhumanity. 'Tis not what *Peter* or what *Paul* says, or what is said of them, that affects the Foundation of true Religion; but 'tis what the Nature of Things require or forbid, that are justly commanded or prohibited. Whatever may be proved true concerning St. *Paul*, does not at all concern the Truth of Religion, whether he was a wise Man or an Enthusiast, an honest Man or an Impostor; but the Religion of him that stands on St. *Paul* must fall with him. Divinity, Law, and Physic, are only rightly founded on the Nature, Reason and Circumstances of Things, all besides is Enthusiasm, Tyranny and Imposture.

If I have uttered the plain Truth, pardon me; if not, make me to know my Error, and I am, Reader,

Your most humble Servant,

M. P.

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SUPERNATURALS EXAMINED:

IN FOUR

DISSERTATIONS

ON THREE

TREATISES.

SUPERNATURALS

EXAMINED:

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ON THREE

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SUPERNATURALS EXAMINED:

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VIZ.

I. On the Obſervations of the Hiſtory and Evidence of the Reſurrection of *Chriſt*. By *Gilbert Weſt*, Eſq;

II. and III. On Miracles and Prophecies, ſhewing the Impoſſibility of the one, and the Falſity of the other; in Anſwer to Mr. *Jackſon*'s Letter to DEISTS.

IV. On the Defence of the peculiar Inſtitutions and Doctrines of *Chriſtianity*.

Take heed leſt any man deceive you. MAT. xxiv. 4.
Hunc igitur terrorem animi tenebraſque neceſſe eſt,
Non radii ſolis, neque lucida tela diei
Diſcutiant, ſed naturæ ſpecies ratioque. T. LUCRET.

Theſe fears, this darkneſs that o'erſpreads our ſouls,
Day can't diſperſe, but thoſe eternal rules
That from firm premiſes right reaſon draws,
And a deep inſight into Nature's laws.

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THE

PREFACE.

READER,

THE firſt of theſe Pieces is an Anſwer to *Gilbert Weſt*, Eſq; to let him know, that his Works, his Goſpel Works, though great, cannot ſave him. It muſt be *through Faith*, to be in a Goſpel Way, *not of Works, leſt any Man ſhould boaſt:* For how can *ordinary* Works merit an extraordinary Reward? For he can do no more than others; they, like him, have been forced to leave the Evidence of the Reſurrection of JESUS, as indefenſible as they found it: So that though he has ſaid much, it is little to the Purpoſe: They all prove *Solomon*'s Writings to be more true than the *Evangeliſts*, viz. *That which is crooked cannot be made ſtraight, and that which is wanting, cannot be numbered.*

I have been the more bold in expoſing my Opinion, becauſe I believe it to be the Dictates of Truth, and right Reaſon, and that Truth is moſt conducive to the Happineſs of Mankind: This I believe, becauſe I ſee that Error and Falſhood tends to Man's Unhappineſs; though I am not inſenſible, that every Good hath, in its Conſequences, ſome Evil; and that every Error and Evil is productive of ſome Good, but with this Difference, Error being itſelf an Evil, generally and naturally produces Evil; and the Good that ariſes from it, is by unavoidable Accident, there being no abſolute Evil; and Truth being a Good, its Productions are generally of the ſame Nature; the Evil that ariſes from it, is by meer Neceſſity: Good and Evil being only relative Properties, naturally and neceſſarily interwoven in the Nature of Things; therefore, though Truth may be the Cauſe of ſome evil Conſequences, as Liberty alſo is; yet they are, in their Conſequences, the Authors of ſo much Good, that I think none but Knaves, Madmen, and Fools, deſire the Suppreſſion of Truth and Liberty, for the little and partial Good that ariſes, or that is likely to ariſe, by ſo doing. Baniſh Truth, and you baniſh Sincerity and Honeſty, conſequently all Virtue, for all ariſes from this Foundation: Baniſh Liberty, and what will follow, but Tyranny, Slavery, and Violence? If Truth and Liberty are exiled, all manner of Wickedneſs will abound as an overflowing Deluge. In a general Deſolation, ſome are Gainers, but what good Man would wiſh for it upon that Account? We ſee that Wars, Fires, Tempeſts, Inundations, Earthquakes, Peſtilences, are not abſolute Evils, but are good to alter and level human Affairs; for in the Shake and Jumble of Things, as they make many rich Men poor; ſo by them many poor

are made rich; yet he muſt be a very bad Man, that wiſhes or helps forward theſe Deſolations.

It may be ſaid, that Truth is not always fit to be uttered; I own that ſome particular Truths, at ſome particular Times are not; but the general Truths of Nature, ſuch as are not injurious to good Government and ſocial Virtues, I think ought to have free Courſe; but that what is contrary, ought not to be propagated nor permitted: For the moſt excellent human Knowledge, is that which ſhews wherein human Happineſs conſiſts, and moſt conduces to it: Though I think that every one is not a proper Judge wherein conſiſts this Sort of Knowledge.

I obſerve upon Reflection, in the 56th Page, I have ſaid, that *all Men ſeek their own Good*. I would not be underſtood to mean that every Man ſeeks *only* his own Good, or another's, merely for the Sake of himſelf; but that this is the *Principal*, or *General*, not the *only* Motive of human Actions. Man is a Machine that is moved by various Springs, but I do not think that the Machine Man, is like Man's Machine; though he is certainly the Machine of Nature, or of God's; and I own that he can, by a Power in himſelf, do Evil as well as Good; but as God, from the Perfection of his Nature, can do only the beſt, ſo he can never blame himſelf, nor behold what is evil to him, nor be unhappy or diſpleaſed, which are the ſame Thing in every Degree: But Man being mutable, and therefore fallible, can know and do Evil, as the Conſequences of his Actions experimentally prove: Man therefore is free to do both, but God is not; for then God would be mutable and imperfect. Men think God wants Power, if he cannot do otherwiſe than he does, not conſidering that ſuch Power it is his Perfection not to have; for though he has it not, he wants it not; for what is perfect wants nothing. God has all perfect and poſſible Power, but what is contrary to his Perfection, is not poſſible with him. He always acts according to the inviarable Perfection of his Nature, and contrary to that it is impoſſible for God to act; yet Men think God could have made the World better than he has done, if he would; for he can do whatever he will. Why then would he not? Why did he not? What is this but magnifying his Power, to diminiſh his Perfection? But the Anſwer is plain and eaſy, *God could not* do otherwiſe than he has done, or cannot do otherwiſe than he does, becauſe he could not, cannot *will* otherwiſe than he does, or than his Will is. To ſuppoſe then God could have made the World better if he would, what is this but ſuppoſing, if God can will what 'tis impoſſible he ſhould, then he may do what it is impoſſible he otherwiſe could? Does not this then amount to an Impoſſibility at laſt? If God can do better than he does, he muſt blame himſelf that he does it not; for ſure it muſt be as eaſy for him to do the beſt, as otherwiſe, but the Perfection of his Nature muſt neceſſitate him always to will and do the beſt. Becauſe Men read that, *With God all Things are poſſible*, they think it is poſſible for God to act as fooliſh as Men *do*, and as romantic as they *think*; that

that he can make a Camel paſs through a Needle's Eye, or an Elephant go through an Auger-hole. But the Excellency of his Nature does not permit him thus to alter his Works; he cannot will Things ſo contrary to his eternal Mind and Rule of Action; he cannot act ſo contrary to his conſtant Actions, becauſe he cannot contradict himſelf. I repeat again, that the Perfection of God's Nature neceſſitates him always to one beſt manner of Action. Well, but ſay they, God is not good at all, if his Goodneſs is not of Choice, if he can do no otherwiſe, if it is of neceſſity and not voluntary. What is this, but a narrow Notion of partial Goodneſs, bringing God's Nature down to Man's, conceiving Goodneſs in God muſt be of the ſame Nature as Goodneſs in Man, the Effect of Paſſion and Partiality of Mind? Is not the Sun light, becauſe it is not always naturally and neceſſarily luminous? Is not God good, becauſe he is always the ſame to all, univerſally, or one univerſal Good? Muſt Goodneſs in God ſpring from Affection, as in Man? Let it be proved to be ſo, and I will aſſent to it; but I do not ſee it ſo in the Conduct of his Providence, by which only I think we can judge of his Nature. Is not that Man good, who is naturally juſt, benevolent, beneficent, humane, and ſincere, ſo that he muſt offer Violence to his Nature to act the contrary? If there be Affections, there are Paſſions in Deity; and if Paſſions, he is changeable; and if changeable, imperfect; then indeed he may judge wrong, and do wrong; may make bad as well as good; may mend and marr; attempt, and fail in his Attempts; may do and undo; repent and be angry; be pleaſed and diſpleaſed; happy and unhappy: Then if he works Wonders, it is not to be wondered at; for, indeed, it would be a Wonder if he did not: Then it would be no Wonder if he ordered Nature's Laws, and contradicted his own Laws and Orders. This would be agreeable to a Power that can do any Thing, and to the Exerciſe of a free Power, or the Power of a Free-will, that can as eaſily Will wrong as right, and evil as good; for if the Will is not equally indifferent to both, how is it free? And if it be, what Perfection has it? Or what perfect invariable Rule is its Guide? For if one Nature predominates, ſo as to keep under or confine its contrary Nature, how is the Nature, which is in Subjection and Confinement, free? Or how can the Poſſeſſor will or act, but according to the Guidance of the ruling Nature? And this he does indeed moſt freely; and for this Sort of Freedom, the Authority of St. *Paul* might be quoted, if we made that our Rule; but this makes it neither the more or leſs true, for Things are as they are in themſelves, whatever *Paul* or *Peter* might think or ſay about them.

The laſt of theſe Pieces, is a Defence of a Book entitled, *Deiſm fairly ſtated, and fully vindicated*; becauſe I think it is the honeſt Performance of an honeſt Man, and becauſe his Anſwerer ſeems to me to have more of *the ſubtilty of the Serpent* in him, than that which is free, open, plain, reſplendent, and rational. *Olet artificium.*

If Printing had been as eaſy to me as Writing, theſe Pieces, but more eſpecially thoſe on Miracles and Prophecies, had made their Appearance in Public long ago. On theſe two Subjects, indeed, Mr. *Chubb* has treated in his poſthumous Works, but in a very different Manner than what is here done; which were in the Printer's Hands long before his were. I will venture to ſay, in Favour of theſe his laſt Productions, that they ſeem to me to be the Reſult of his laſt and beſt Judgment of Things; expreſſed with great Freedom, in a plain and nervous Way of Reaſoning, as clear as the Light; with a Coolneſs like the Evening of that Day wherein God walked in *Eden*; which appears to be metaphorically more true here than there: Though in theſe Works of his, that great and good Man, Mr. *Foſter*, is foiled, and the divine Legation of that mighty Diſputant, Mr. *Warburton*, is torn to Rags, never to be patched up more: And if his Thoughts on the *Scriptures*, on *Divine Impreſſions*, on *Deity*, *Religion*, *Revelation*, a *future State*, &c. are not attempted to be anſwered, I ſhall aſcribe it to the Conſciouſneſs Men have of failing in the Attempt; for though he was not learned in Words, his Words are fit to inſtruct moſt of our learned Men. I am,

READER,

Your Well-Wiſher

to the Way of Truth,

MORAL PHILOSOPHER.

SUPERNATURALS EXAMINED.

DISSERTAION I.

On the OBSERVATIONS *of the* Hiſtory *and* Evidence *of the Reſurrection of* Jeſus Chriſt, *by* Gilbert Weſt, *Eſq*;

THESE Obſervations are occaſioned by the Objections made againſt the Evidence in *The Reſurrection of* Jeſus *conſidered*; from which, the Beginning of his Introduction tells us they took their Riſe; becauſe, though ſatisfied with the Abilities of two of his Antagoniſts to that Piece, *he was not fully ſatisfied with their Manner of clearing the ſacred Writings from all the Contradictions charged upon them: Therefore he ſet to read and examine for himſelf; being aſtoniſhed at finding Writers who, for above theſe* 1600 *Years, have been reputed holy and inſpired, charged with ſuch a Contrariety in their Accounts, as ill agreed with either of thoſe Epithets:* And becauſe he thinks he has *diſcovered the Vanity and Weakneſs of ſuch Imputation*, I thought fit to examine his Diſcovery. Such Obſervations as ſeem to carry Argument with them I ſhall only regard; the reſt I paſs over, aiming at Brevity. As this Piece came out after *The Reſurrection Defenders ſtript of all Defence*, it could not be brought in to ring Chimes with the reſt, and therefore muſt be tolled by itſelf; which makes the Muſic the duller, but the Tone is not the leſs clear and diſtinct. Since Reaſons for Examination of Things are objected againſt by no Diſputants, if we allow *the Authority of Reaſon* to ſupercede all other, of what Conſequence is the Liſt of *great Names*, which this Author gives, who have been of the believing Party? For all Religions that have been countenanced, encouraged, and eſtabliſhed among a People, muſt have had the Favour of many *great Men*. When we ſeek Truth, we are not to regard *Names*, but *Things*: Whether therefore the Writer be a *Clergyman*, or a *Layman*, dignified or without Dignity, it matters not: We are not to look to the Writer, but to what is written. If a *Plowman* ſpeak equal Truth with a *Biſhop*, or a *Nobleman*, it deſerves equal Regard; for though there ought to be a Deference paid to Mens Perſons, according to their Place or Merit, Truth ſhould be eſteemed the ſame in all.

I ſhall not trace this Obſervator in his long and perplexed Me-

thod; for if all agree, as he would have it, concerning the Evidence of the Women; there are unanſwerable Objections which he has not cleared up, but puzzled rather by a Multitude of Words; and ſome that he has evaded without mentioning, or attempting to clear up. Suppoſe the Matter ſhould turn out, as he has endeavoured to repreſent it, it is evident the *Relaters* were *miſerable Hiſtorians*, to put their Readers to ſo much Trouble to know *their* Meaning, and reconcile *their* Differences. But it will be found by farther Obſervation, and nicer Scrutiny, that the Matter is *irreconcileable*, and that Revelation is ſuch a Light to Reaſon, as Reaſon cannot find out.

The *Gentleman* takes great Pains to *force* a Reconciliation of the diſagreeing Accounts of the Women's Evidence of the Reſurrection of Jeſus; as if the making them *conſiſtent*, was ſufficient to prove the Truth of the *Whole*; or that the *whole Truth* reſted on the Agreement of thoſe *particular Accounts*; not ſeeming to know, that the Truth of Facts are not *proved* by the *Conſiſtency* of the Relations of thoſe Facts, but that they are infallibly *diſproved* by their *Inconſiſtency*: For it is not ſo certain, that ſeveral Accounts of Things which *agree* are *true*; as it is certain, that wherein they *diſagree*, they cannot both be true; and it is poſſible neither of them may. The manner in which the Obſervator has attempted to reconcile the Text, in brief, is thus.

Mary Magdalene, the *other Mary*, and *Salome*, go to the Sepulchre, as in St. *Mark*, to which *Mary Magdalene* approaching, ſees the Stone rolled away; ſhe leaves her Companions, and runs and tells *Peter* and *John*.

Her Companions, in the mean Time, enter the Sepulchre, ſee and hear Angels, who tell them *Jeſus* is riſen, and bid them tell it to the Diſciples; they returning to do as commanded, *Jeſus* meets theſe (*Mary* and *Salome*) by the Way.

Before they come to the Diſciples, *Peter* and *John*, by the Information of *Mary Magdalene*, came to the Sepulchre; they found it open, and the Body gone, but no Angel.

Mary Magdalene, who went again with *Peter* and *John*, ſtays behind at the Sepulchre, after they are gone, and there ſees Angels and *Jeſus*, who converſe with her, as in St. *John*, and ſhe departs.

Then *Joanna* and Women with her, (among whom *Mary Magdalene* was not) come to the Sepulchre; they alſo ſee and hear Angels, and go and tell the Diſciples; which occaſions the Diſciples with *Peter* to go again to the Sepulchre, who ſee the Body gone, as before, and now ſee Angels.

But when *Mary* and *Salome* made their Report, this Deponent faith not. This Scheme is fraught with theſe Diſagreements and Abſurdities.

That *Mary Magdalene* left her Companion (or Companions) and returned alone to acquaint *Peter* and *John*, and was not one of them, that met *Jeſus* by the Way, is contrary to St. *Matthew*.

That *Joanna* and the Women with her were a different Company from *Mary Magdalene* and her

her Company, is contrary to St. *Luke*; and that their Report occaſioned *Peter*, to go a ſecond Time to the Sepulchre, is without Authority.

That *Peter* and *John* went a ſecond Time to ſee no more than they could at firſt; or ſeeing any Thing more, heard nothing from the Angels, as the Women did, though they came about the ſame Errand; or that they had any Diſcourſe together, are Surmiſes, Conjectures, and Inventions.

That the Angels and *Jeſus* ſent a Meſſage to *Peter*, and the reſt of the Diſciples, to tell them he was riſen? Yet both the Angels and himſelf got out of the Way, when they came to ſee after him, and yet were there again, as ſoon as the Apoſtles were departed, is abſurd and improbable.

That ſo great Care ſhould be taken by the Angels and *Jeſus*, to deliver a Meſſage to the two *Maries*, or (as the Obſervator will have it) to *Mary* and *Salome*, and yet it was not their Report to the Apoſtles, but that of *Joanna* and her Party diſtinct from them, that told the Reſurrection to the Diſciples, is an Explanation that adds Blunder to the Hiſtory: And that there is no Account when they that ſaw and handled *Jeſus* delivered their Meſſage at all, according to the Obſervator, makes a manifeſt *Omiſſion* and *Error* in the Hiſtorians. But this is a meer Contrivance to explain an *inexplicable Difficulty*, to make the particular Reports agree, which nevertheleſs they fail to do.

If the Women that were with *Mary Magdalene* were gone back from the Sepulchre before ſhe returned to it, and in their going ſaw *Chriſt*, conſequently *they* ſaw him *firſt*; and yet St. *Mark* ſays, Chriſt *firſt appeared to* Mary Magdalene.

This Author ſays, that the two Diſciples going to *Emmaus*, in all likelihood, heard not the Report of *Mary Magdalene*, (pape 7.) nor that of the other *Mary*, with whom he joins *Salome*; whereas St. *Luke* tells us, it was them by Name *which told theſe Things unto the Apoſtles*, and mentions them together as one Company.

(Page 79.) The Obſervator ſays, that *the Difficulty upon ſtating the Appearances to be different, and made to different Perſons, ariſes chiefly from* Mary Magdalene *being mentioned as preſent by every Evangeliſt: But there ſeems to be this Reaſon for it, ſhe was at the Head of the Women, and the Chief of thoſe who attended our Lord, and followed him from* Galilee. But what Authority has this Author to contradict the Text, and ſuppoſe the Hiſtorians always put down her Name as one among them, whether ſhe was there or no. If the Text cannot ſtand upon its own Authority, it neither can on his Explanation of it. Our *Squire*, by a very pretty Method, *contradicts* the Text to reconcile the *Contradictions* of it. But as I believe he knows *Greek* better than St. *Matthew* did, he muſt needs know what St. *Matthew* knew nothing of, and therefore owns, (p. 24.) that *there are two inaccuracies to be charged upon St.* Matthew.

The firſt is, that Mary Magdalene, *with the other* Mary, *ſaw the Angel*. This he may alſo charge upon St. *Mark* and *Luke*, for they ſay the ſame. An *orthodox* Man I perceive may *contradict*

dict the Text, to make that which is apparently *wrong* appear *right*; but he that is cautious of Error muſt, *right or wrong*, ſwallow down the *Contradictions* of it.

The ſecond is, that *St.* Matthew *takes no Notice at all of* Salome, *who was preſent*. How does the *Gentleman* know ſhe was preſent? He imagines it. If his Imagination is right, how does he excuſe theſe Things? Why thus: by ſaying, *the Evangeliſts were illiterate Men, not ſkilled in the Rules of Eloquence, or grammatical Niceties*; yet very often he quotes the *Greek* to prove his point by *grammatical Niceties*. Sometimes they are ſaid to have the *extraordinary Aſſiſtance* of the Holy Spirit, that they may be believed; and at other Times, they are repreſented as not having the *common Aſſiſtance* of *common Senſe*, that they may be excuſed.

I am not for making a Breach where there is none. I do, and always have, paſſed over abundance of little Particulars, and trifling Matters, that the *Defenders* of the Reſurrection puzzle themſelves about to reconcile; but I cannot agree with them that cannot agree with themſelves. I cannot believe that *Contradictions*, *Abſurdities*, and *Diſagreements*, are true. I never *ſtrain* the Text, to make it ſpeak what it does not, or to ſignify otherwiſe than it naturally does: I am more willing to ſee *Truth* than *Error* in it; and had rather reconcile it, than ſet it at Variance; but I do not think it my Duty to receive that as Truth, which does not appear like it; or by forced Conſtructions, to endeavour to make that appear to be Truth which does not, or allow Things to be contrary to what they appear to me: For this is not to find Truth, but to falſify it; not to endeavour to ſee Things in the Light, but to lock them up in Darkneſs. I am not for *miſrepreſenting* Things, but for *repreſenting* them in a clear and proper manner. I am willing to be convinced by Reaſon; and, when convinced of Error, thankfully to acknowledge it. I love Truth, though it be unfaſhionable, diſcountenanced, and deſpiſed: Enquiry is the Way to it.

I proceed to prove however, that theſe Hiſtorians diſagree in their Narrations, *each of them* plainly ſhews, by his Story of the Women's going to the Sepulchre, that *Mary Magdalene* was one of them that went thither, whether with Company more or leſs, or without, and that each of them intended it for her FIRST Time of going there. *Matthew* ſignifies, that ſhe and another came thither *immediately after the Sepulchre was opened*, and not one of them ſay ſhe was there before. St. *Mark*, that ſhe and two more ſaid among themſelves in going, *Who ſhall roll us away the Stone from the Sepulchre?* Therefore ſhe is not to be ſuppoſed to have ſeen the Stone rolled away before. St. *Luke* ſays, ſhe and others went there, and *carried ſweet Spices to anoint or embalm the Body*; therefore *Mary Magdalene* had not been there before, and ſaw the Body gone, and therefore 'tis evident, that each Writer intended his own Account of *Mary Magdalene*'s going to the Sepulchre to be the firſt Time of her going there, as well as St. *John*, who tells us only of her going while it was yet dark, and finding

finding the Sepulchre open, runs back ſurprized, and tells it, ſaying, *They have taken the Lord out of the Sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.* The *Time* indeed that St. *John* ſpeaks of her going *firſt* there, will allow for her going again *with other Women*, but the other Particulars are *irreconcileable* to it; therefore, however *contradictory* their Accounts are to one another, 'tis not in the Wit of Man, without *Contradictions* and *Abſurdities*, to make them otherwiſe, or reconcile the Matter by ſuppoſing, as the Gentleman does, that *Women came at different Times, and in different Companies to the Sepulchre.*

This Obſervator ſays, *Mary Magdalene* went the firſt Time with the other *Mary*, and *Salome*; and as ſoon as ſhe ſaw the Sepulchre open, leaving them behind, ran and told *Peter* and *John* of it; and neither ſaw the Angels at the Sepulchre, nor *Jeſus* in her Return. Becauſe the Story told by St. *John* does not agree with what St. *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke* ſay, he denies them to be true: And becauſe St. *Matthew*'s Story of the Watch does not agree with other Circumſtances in the ſame Evangeliſt, nor with what is ſaid in all the others, I have denied that Story to be true. How then does he by this Invention reconcile the Evangeliſts more than I do? We are then agreed that St. *Matthew* is wrong; and one may as well conclude, without any Contrivance, to ſet them right, that *the Circumſtances of their Proofs do not agree*; as by long, tireſome, and vexatious Labour to avoid the Embarraſſment, fall into as great at laſt; and by taking Pains to prove they *do agree*, prove unavoidably, contrary to Deſign, that *they cannot be made to agree*; which renders them more fatally worſe, than if there had been no Pains taken about them. And ſince, of the two Women that touched him, St. *Matthew* ſays, *Mary Magdalene* was one, which this Author, though a Believer, ſays was *not*; it further invalidates the Proof, and makes that worſe, which is already too bad, and in very Deed cannot be mended.

The next Obſervation is, that *there were ſeveral diſtinct Appearances of Angels*, becauſe theſe Appearances too do not agree; but I think 'tis more likely there were *none at all*, and that 'tis as well to be an *Unbeliever* upon eaſy Terms, as to take Abundance of Pains to be a *Heretic*, and ſo diſtanced from the *orthodox Faith*, after all one's Labour.

Our Obſervator ſays, *the Angels*, (*i. e.* the Ghoſts) did not tell *Mary Magdalene* that *Jeſus* was riſen, though St. *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*, ſay they did; but he only denies what they ſay, to make them ſay as he would have them: Therefore, *as his Methods of Interpretation are ſtrained and unnatural, they tend only to diſcover the Greatneſs of his Embarraſſment*, as well as of thoſe on his Side that have been before him. Though he thinks he has done better than they, he is much miſtaken. He ſays, *the Angels were not always viſible, but appeared and diſappeared as they thought proper.* If Angels are Creatures of Men's making, as I apprehend they are, Men can do what they will with them: But that Subſtance which is the Object of Senſe, muſt remain

main the Object of the ſame Senſe, while it remains the ſame Subſtance, if it be not removed, nor intercepted, or there is no Certainty in our Senſes. An Angel that vaniſhes, as Bubbles do, is a meer Apparition, a Phantom, an *ignis fatuus*, an angelic Bubble, but not a real ſubſtantial Angel; if there be any real Subſtance in Angels, and if an Angel be not a meer Phantom, or a Creature of Man's airy Fancy or Imagination.

(P. 36, 37.) If any one aſks, *For what Purpoſe did the Angels deſcend from Heaven?* He tells us, to *fright away the Soldiers, and give the Women free acceſs* to the Sepulchre. But why did not the Angels ſuffer them to ſtay and ſee *Chriſt* riſe? No, then they would have blabbed the Secret, and we might have had other Teſtimony than that of the Saints; if it came any other Way, it had been unſanctified: 'Tis not for Heathens to proclaim, nor for Pagans to preach the Goſpel! Or is it aſked, why the Angels ſtaid not 'till the Women came, before they rolled away the Stone, that they might have ſeen *Chriſt* riſe? No, *Chriſt* left his Linen behind him, for a Proof that it was not proper for them to ſee him riſe, nor for him to ſtay till it was light.

(P. 17.) The Obſervator owns, that *the Soldiers ſaw not* Chriſt *come out of the Sepulchre, being in a Swoon or Trance.* The Angels were quite raſh, hot, and haſty, they flaſh'd their Lightning too ſoon; one would think it burnt their Fingers to contain it. The Soldiers themſelves ſaid they were *aſleep*; St. *Matthew* ſays, they *became like dead Men*, which is much the ſame, for Sleep reſembles Death: Perhaps they might be drunk, and ſo either in a *Swoon*, or *aſleep*; and the ſacred Hiſtorian might as probably dream at the End, as at the Beginning of his Book. Though this is ſufficient to anſwer this great Book, yet I ſhall make ſome further Remarks.

The *Gentleman* paſſes over without Notice my Arguments againſt the Probability of there being any Watch; only he inſinuates *, that the Setting a Guard is true, *becauſe we have no authentic Act of the Elders and chief Prieſts to the contrary.* This ſeems to me intended to wave a Difficulty that cannot be encountered, for the Circumſtances in our own Evangeliſts contradict their own poſitive Proof. If the chief Prieſts had made ſuch an Act that had reached us, we ſhould have ſaid, it had been made by them after St. *Matthew*'s Goſpel was written, in Contradiction to him; and it could not be done before, if they knew nothing of it. He ſays †, *The Sanhedrim, by an expreſs Deputation to all the Synagogues of the Jews throughout the World, only ſays, that the Diſciples of* Jeſus *came by Night, and ſtole away his Body, without making any Mention of the* Roman *Guards*; therefore, to be ſure, they knew of none: This, ſays he, was by an Amendment of theirs, without telling us how it was before the Amendment. Another Argument given us, that the Diſciples did not ſteal away the Body, is, *becauſe in the Acts of the Apoſtles they are not charged with it.* This makes it the more likely to be fact; becauſe that Author has not mentioned ſuch

* Page 345.

† Page 364.

as

an Accuſation, which 'tis owned, in St. *Matthew*, they ſtood *charged* with; and he endeavours to *diſcharge* it, by the Story of watching the Sepulchre. The Report of the Diſciples ſtealing the Body away, and ſaying he was riſen, which is confidently believed by the *Jewiſh* Nation *from that Day to this*, is a Confeſſion that there was not Evidence enough to convince them of the Truth of the Reſurrection of *Jeſus*, at that Time when it was ſaid to be done: Yet now, 1700 Years after, in a foreign Country, the *bare Reports*, the *contradictory Reports* of we know not *who*, is eſteemed ſufficient to convince us!

Juſt as I was writing this, came to ſee me my old Friend *Rabbi Nathan Sabtecha*, a Man well verſed in the Controverſy between the *Jews* and *Chriſtians*, to whom I communicated my Meditations on this Subject; he broke out in the following Words, which I took a Memorandum of, as follows:

'The whole Relation of the 'Reſurrection of *Jeſus* ſeems to 'be rather that of Dreamers and 'Viſionaries, than of Matters of 'Fact, it is ſo confuſed and blind-'ly told. So abſurd and contra-'dictory is your Goſpel Hiſtory, 'that its own Relations are its 'own Refutation.

'The Soldiers made a falſe Re-'port, as we are told by thoſe 'who will have it, that the Se-'pulchre was guarded by Soldi-'ers, (which we know nothing 'of;) but if it was ſo, did not '*Jeſus* know it? If not, ſure he 'never roſe: If he roſe, why did 'he not by his Preſence confute 'it? What did he riſe again for, 'if it was to be a Secret? Better 'he had never riſen at all, than 'thus to riſe, and ſecrete himſelf. 'How did he prove himſelf to be '*the Light of the World*, if he left 'the World in *Darkneſs* about 'his Reſurrection? The great 'Article of all, and Proof of all 'his other Proofs, left unproved! 'For if he be not riſen, O ye 'Chriſtians! *your Faith is vain!* 'And if he is riſen, and we are 'left in *Darkneſs* about it, ye can 'neither bring us nor yourſelves 'into the *Light of it!*'

I told him that my Author ſaid *, that *Chriſt promiſed to give that evil Generation a ſufficient Proof of his riſing from the Grave, after lying three Days in it*; but that he abſolutely denies *Chriſt promiſed to appear to them.*

'I grant it, (ſaid *Rabbi* haſtily) 'nor to any one elſe. The patch-'work Promiſes do not agree 'with the patchwork Performan-'ces. So then this was a ſuffi-'cient Proof, without the Ap-'pearance of it. Suppoſe Dr. '*Emmes*'s Diſciples had affirmed '*he roſe from the Dead*, and that 'ſome of them had *ſeen him*, as 'they might have affirmed, could 'they but have conveyed away 'his Body by Night; would *Eng-'land*, would *London* have thought 'it a *ſufficient Proof* of his riſing 'from the Grave? If this would 'have been *inſufficient* for you, how 'could the like be *ſufficient* for 'us? Our Fathers required a rea-'ſonable Proof of his riſing from 'the Dead, and the moſt reaſon-'able of all Proofs was ſuch as 'the Nature of the Caſe afforded. 'This Fact, if it was a Fact, af-'forded a *perſonal* Evidence, and 'no other, and they deſired no 'other; an Evidence, the moſt 'eaſy to him, and moſt convinc-'ing

* Page 302.

'ing to them. This would have 'been the fulleſt Proof, the juſt-'eſt Teſtimony, the trueſt De-'monſtration, the moſt natural, 'moſt reaſonable, and moſt pro-'per; every Way fit, and no 'Way unfit, in every Reſpect 'right, and in no Reſpect wrong: 'The utmoſt Satisfaction they 'could have, was to have ſeen 'and heard him as before, ſuch 'a Proof as their Senſes would 'not permit them to deny; but 'ſince that was denied to them, 'they had a Right, and a very 'juſt Right, to deny all other '*pretended Evidences*. Your *Chriſt* 'declared that we were to believe 'in him; but believing others of 'him, is not believing in him.

But (replied I in the Obſervator's Senſe, expreſſed in Page 303) *They had no juſt Pretenſions, who were Unbelievers, and perſecuted him to the Evidence given the others.*

'Yes, (returned he upon me 'ſmartly) the more juſt Preten-'ſions, and he under an indiſ-'penſible Obligation to appear 'to them above all others; to 'many in common, as much as 'to one; to all the *Jews*, as well 'as to your Apoſtle *Paul*, who 'had been a Perſecutor; that '*where Sin abounded, Grace might 'much more abound*; that he might 'ſhew himſelf an impartial Be-'ing, and a Lover of Mankind; 'that he might prove, he could 'practiſe the Precepts he taught; '*love ye your Enemies, and do Good 'to them that hate you*; that he 'might reſemble him whoſe Son 'he called himſelf; that is, *the 'heavenly Father, who ſends his 'Sun and Rain on the Juſt and 'Unjuſt*; that he might act ac-'cording to his own Profeſſion; 'that *he was come to ſeek and to 'ſave them that were loſt*; that he 'might prove the Truth of what 'he declared, that *he came to call 'Sinners to Repentance*. I ſay, '(continued he) according to his 'own Precepts and profeſſed 'Principles, *Jeſus* was under an 'indiſpenſible Obligation to ap-'pear to that Generation of our 'People; to his bittereſt and moſt 'malignant Enemies; which muſt 'have converted them, cauſing '*Joy in Heaven*, according to his 'own Doctrine, and brought im-'mortal Honour to himſelf on 'Earth. Who, (but Chriſtians 'themſelves) can believe other-'wiſe than we do;—that *the Diſ-'ciples of* Jeſus *ſtole him away by 'Night*, if he appeared to none 'but them? Nay, it muſt appear 'dubious to the thinking Part of 'Chriſtians; therefore, we have 'the greateſt Reaſon in the World 'to believe, the Reſurrection was 'made by thoſe who aſſerted it. 'The Diſciples had the leaſt 'Cauſe of any for ſuch an Ap-'pearance, as they were Believ-'ers already, and if they were 'righteous Men; for ſuch *need 'no Repentance*. Jeſus profeſſed, '*he came not to call the Righteous 'to Repentance*: But if the Diſci-'ples were not righteous Men, 'what had he made of them all 'the while he had been with 'them? And what were they the 'better for being his Diſciples? 'If they were not righteous Men, 'what Reaſon have we to believe 'them? It had been better to 'have converted, and ſent his E-'nemies to preach the Goſpel, 'by making Diſciples of them 'that were qualified. If your

Chriſt

'*Chriſt* was *the Light of the World*, 'as he declared himſelf to be; 'why did he not riſe in the Light, 'and enlighten the World with 'his Preſence? Why did he riſe 'and ſet in Darkneſs? Why did 'he ariſe in the Dark, and after-'wards play leaſt in Sight? Was 'he afraid of a ſecond Crucifixi-'on; where was his miraculous 'Power? If *he came into the World*, '*that the World through him might* '*believe, and that believing they* '*might be ſaved*, why did not his 'Works correſpond with his Doc-'trine? Why did he deny us the 'reaſonable Evidences of a well 'grounded Faith? And how then 'can you Chriſtians blame us for 'not believing *this was he that* '*ſhould come, and that we are not* '*to look for another?* For what 'Works did he do? It is plain 'our Fathers queſtioned his Mi-'racles; if they ſaid, *he caſt out* '*Devils by* Beelzebub, what could 'they mean, but that they 'thought it Stratagem, and not 'pure Miracle; that the Devil 'was put in, before he was caſt 'out by the ſame Art. It is cer-'tain, that miraculous Works of 'real Goodneſs could not be a-'ſcribed by them to the Devil, 'as is confidently pretended. 'Whatever Wonders are attri-'buted to him in your Goſpels, 'it is evident they were all done 'in the Dark, or out of Sight of 'any but his Friends; whatever 'thoſe may have written, who 'wrote what they pleaſ'd: For 'they are all as good as denied, 'ſince they own that a *Miracle* 'was what our Fathers wanted, 'as a Proof of his Character. '*What Sign ſheweſt thou that we* '*may ſee and believe thee*; *what* '*doeſt thou work*, was their Cry? 'And whatever may be by your 'Goſpel Hiſtorians pretended, '*Jeſus* himſelf confeſſed, *he that* '*doeth Truth, cometh to the Light*, '*that his Works may be manifeſt*; 'and as this was his own Doc-'trine, it was calling on him to 'put it in Practice, and to come 'to the Light, that they might 'come to the Truth; and know 'the Truth of his Light, and the 'Light of his Truth: For as *he* '*that walks in Darkneſs, knows* '*not whither he goes*; ſo he that 'believes in Darkneſs, knows 'not the Conſequence of ſo blind 'a Faith. A miraculous Proof of 'his Miſſion was what they per-'petually called upon him for, as 'your Evangeliſts themſelves con-'feſs; therefore they never had 'a Satisfactory one. At Length 'we are told, his own *Reſurrec-*'*tion* was to be the conſummate 'Proof and Evidence of his Miſ-'ſion; and ſee how this Proof is 'proved, and this Evidence turns 'out! then it is to be proved by '*another Miracle!* what does this 'look like? The honeſt Man, 'that can pay the juſt Demands 'made upon him in current Coin, 'will never ſhuffle off his Credi-'tors with bad Bills. If the Story 'of *one Miracle* be defective, how 'can it be patched up by *another* 'of a different Kind? Where 'was the Reſidence of *Jeſus* the 'forty Days he is ſaid to abide 'on Earth after his Reſurrection? 'How could he be alive ſo long 'among his Diſciples, and not 'be diſcovered to others? Why 'did he not in all that Time ap-'pear in Public as before? Why 'did he ſecrete himſelf on Pur-'poſe to make his Reſurrection doubted?

'doubted? Why is the Means of 'Salvation made ſo unreaſonable, 'that we muſt believe, what did 'not appear? if *Jeſus* kept out 'of the Sight of Unbelievers, 'they could not be convinced; 'and if his riſing again was not 'to convince them, to what Pur-'poſe was it? Why did not the 'Diſciples proclaim that *Jeſus* 'was riſen, before they reported 'he was aſcended; and not to be 'ſeen, while his own Appearance 'could have proved it? Why did 'he ſend his Diſciples (as they 'ſay he did) to be knocked at 'Head, for telling People what 'they could not believe; when 'he might have prevented their 'ill Succeſs only by his Appear-'ance? Which would have pre-'vented their Perſecution;—ſo 'their Blood is owing to his ill 'Conduct. The Watch (if there 'was any) denied his Reſurrec-'tion. What is pretended of the 'terrible Angel and Earthquake, 'was before any Diſciple came to 'the Sepulchre, according to '*Matthew*'s own Account; how 'then could the Diſciples know 'any Thing of the Matter? Did 'the *Soldiers* tell *them?* Then 'whom themſelves call Liars 'were the Authors: I dare ſay 'the high Prieſts and Elders were 'not ſo great with the Diſciples 'to acquaint them with it. Does 'not this then look like Forgery, 'and ſufficient of itſelf to ſhew of 'what Nature it is, without an 'authentic Act of the Elders and 'chief Prieſts to the contrary? 'And if they really bribed the Sol-'diers to report what they did, I 'would fain be informed how the 'Diſciples came to know it: It 'appears to me, concluded he, 'that the greateſt of all Goſpel 'Miracles is this, that ſo mean a 'Plot ſhould have ſo mighty a 'Succeſs; tho' this may be ac-'counted for, but I have ſaid e-'nough to you, and too much to 'moſt, and indeed I think ſuffi-'cient to all;" and ſo he de-parted.

I think, upon Reflection, the *Rabbi* has ſaid all that need be ſaid to reaſonable Men, and to others 'tis not needful to ſay any Thing; 'tis enough for the former, and every Thing ſaid is not ſuffi-cient or too much for the latter; yet to corroborate the whole, a few riſing Conſiderations claim the Reader's Regard.

We are told, that *Chriſt* ex-plained to the two Diſciples going to *Emmaus, from* Moſes *thro' all the Prophets, the Things concerning himſelf:* But we are not told what that neceſſary Explanation was; they give us no Manner of Ac-count what was this Revelation made to them; ſo that *our Eyes are* ſtill *holden that we cannot know him.* And tho', as it ſeems at ano-ther Time, *he opened their Under-ſtandings, that they might under-ſtand the Scriptures,* they, nor their Succeſſors, do not open ours, nor tell us any Part of what he ſaid; and notwithſtanding he com-manded them *to ſpeak that in the Light, which he ſpoke to them in Darkneſs,* (Mat. x. 27.) it is kept in the Darkneſs he delivered it. Suppoſing then they had all the Evidence pretended, ſince we have nothing of the Evidence they had, why ſhould we be required to believe as they did? And if the *Matter* of their Stories be true, that *Jeſus* roſe from the Dead; which Fact is not diſputed, but

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the Evidence of it, for it is told in ſo miſerable a *Manner*, that 'tis evident Miſtakes are conveyed to us; our Faith of it is on a *fallible Foundation*, and conſequently is not founded on divine Inſpiration, but on the diſagreeing Reports of Perſons, *whom* neither we nor our Fathers ever knew, nor *when* nor *where* they were firſt reported; nor can we have better; and all adverſe Proof, the *Chriſtians* have, with all their Art and Power, deſtroyed. They began the *Burning of Books* early, *Acts* xix. 19. and as ſoon as they had Power, *burnt not only Books, but Men*; to the Honour and Glory of *Chriſt*'s Church, for every Church ſubſiſts by Sacrifice. *Believe or be damned* was the firſt *Chriſtian* Authority, and *believe or be burned* was the next, as ſoon as they had Power to make it and put it in Execution. To *hate Friends and Relations for* Chriſt's *Sake, is a true* Chriſtian *Doctrine*; and conſequently, to perſecute and burn them for *Chriſt's* Sake, is a true *Chriſtian Spirit*. Does not a Law to puniſh a Man for not believing a Report, afford Reaſon enough to render it ſuſpicious? For 'tis not the Nature of *Truth* to uſe any Authority but that of *right Reaſon* and *clear Evidence*. She never obtrudes herſelf on Truſt, nor forces her Way by Pains and Penalties. From thoſe that will not regard her Voice, ſhe turns away; their Diſregard brings on their own Diſgrace and Puniſhment. Does not the Neceſſity of believing the Thing propoſed *on hard and rigid Terms*, ſhew the Reaſon of that Neceſſity? For if you don't believe, you will examine; and Examination makes Frauds as well as Truths appear. If the Reporters and Aſſertors cannot work upon Men's *Reaſon*, they muſt, *in order to be believed*, work upon their *Paſſions*, for all depends upon *Belief*; therefore *he that believes and profeſſes ſhall be ſaved!* noble Encouragement! and *he that believes not, ſhall be damned!* dreadful Terror! whom they cannot lead, they drive; the *firſt* takes in all eaſy good-natured Fools, the *other* all tardy timorous ones. So the poor Fools of this World are perſuaded, that by this Means they are made rich and wiſe in Faith. Thus thoſe who are governed more by their *Paſſions* than *Reaſon*, the *Simple* and *Sinners*, who are by much the greater Part of the World, are drawn in; theſe bring Numbers into the Church, Numbers bring Power, and by Power the reſt are compell'd, at leaſt, to pretend Belief. Thus *Faith*, of one Sort or other, like a *ſpiritual Deluge*, has overrun the World. As when the Dogs are muzzled, the Wolves will deſtroy the Sheep; ſo Silence the wiſe and experienced, and the Incautious will be taken in, and become the Prey of Men practiſed in Deceit. This may certainly be ſaid of the *Mother* Church, whatever may be pleaded for her *Children*.

(Page 203.) This Writer owns, that as St. *John* ſays, TWICE Jeſus *came in when the Doors where ſhut, he intended to ſignify that he came in miraculouſly, or he would not have mentioned that otherwiſe trifling Circumſtance of the Doors being ſhut*. As this Gentleman confeſſes it requires no *great Depth of Philoſophy to underſtand it impoſſible, that it cannot be imagined how*

a ſolid Body can penetrate a ſolid Body, and yet both of them remain the ſame Bodies after as before; 'tis the plainer Truth; and tho' it be ſo, I apprehend that St. *John*'s Faith was able *to remove this Mountain*; for Faith can ſurmount all Contradictions. That a *material* and a *ſpiritual* Body may be the ſame, or different only at different Times, according to the Will of the Spirit that poſſeſſes it, might have been St. *John*'s Opinion for aught we know, if we may conjecture his Faith by the Facts he relates. Though, according to this Way of Thinking, the Gentleman merrily ſays, in this Senſe, *the Spirituality of the Walls and Doors may be as well inferred as the Spirituality of Chriſt's Body*, and imagines that Argument would very well have become me; I really think the ſame, had I firſt had that unlucky, as he has the *lucky* Thought. In me indeed, it would have been as he ſays, *ſophiſtical, ludicrous, and abſurd*; in him I really think it is *witty, pleaſant, and a propos.* He ſeems to grant, (P. 206.) that what is contrary to the Laws of Nature, cannot be effected: How comes he then to talk of *a Power that can controul the Laws of Nature*, (P. 207.) and *opening a Paſſage through Walls and Doors, without making any viſible Breach in them?* For if this be not effected by ſome natural Means, 'tis as much contrary to the Laws of Nature, as the other. If the Laws of Nature are the Laws of God, and he can ſubvert thoſe Laws, then God can contradict himſelf, and every Abſurdity is poſſible with him; but if this be impoſſible, then God can do nothing ſupernatural. This is a Sketch of an Anſwer to his Challenge (P. 142.) on the Impoſſibility of Miracles. *Let thoſe that think this Point* (ſays he) *can be made out, try their Strength in this Argument, which ſupercedes all other Objections that can be made in Favour of any Miracle.* A Diſſertation on this Subject follows, that anſwers his Challenge.

As to the *three thouſand* ſaid to be converted by St. *Peter*'s Sermon, I have, in my Opinion, heard a *thouſand* Times better Sermons, that I fear have never converted *three*; therefore, I am dubious, if the Word *thouſand* be not an Interpolation. If his Sermon converted them *all*, then all the others talking with Tongues was to no Purpoſe: It may be they talked in the Spirit, ſince it was by the Spirit they ſpoke; for we are not told one Word that any of them ſaid, beſides *Peter*; and if the Hiſtorian was faithful (which is not to be queſtioned) undoubtedly he has told us all they ſaid; for if 'tis not to be ſuppoſed they omitted any Thing againſt themſelves, as they have not mentioned that the Jew Rulers did not accuſe the Diſciples of ſtealing away the Body of their Maſter, when they were brought before them, therefore there was nothing ſaid by thoſe Rulers about it, and therefore the Diſciples had no Hand in it: I ſay, as they omitted no Circumſtance that made againſt themſelves, it cannot be imagined, but they faithfully inſerted every miraculous Circumſtance, and all the Particulars of Prodigies that happened in Favour of themſelves and their Miſſion; therefore not mentioning what the

the others ſaid, ſhews, they ſaid nothing.

If this wonderful Converſion be true, 'tis no leſs wonderful that ſo many, and all at once, believed the Reſurrection of *Jeſus* then, and ſo few of them have believed any Thing of it *ſince*. The Holy Ghoſt, if he had gone on, might ſoon have converted the whole Nation by *three thouſand* in a Day. What hindered this hopeful Progreſs? It was not in Man's Power to ſtop his Maker's; why then was *his Arm ſhortened*, ſince he wills that *all Men be ſaved*, and no Man can ſave himſelf? I apprehend this Miracle of the Tongues has ſome myſtical Meaning; and it ſeems to me to be this, that as *cloven* Tongues ſat on the Head of the Speakers, it ſhews that the Goſpel has a *two-fold Interpretation*, and that the Preachers are *double tongu'd*, ſo that the Hearers cannot underſtand the Spirit's Meaning. The Spirit came *like the Ruſhing of a mighty Wind*, and has continued to be like that *boiſterous Element* ever ſince. There were Men gathered together from *every Nation under Heaven*, that the Goſpel might be preached to all Nations; this is typical of a world of Confuſion in the Church; what Believers take for *Rapſody* and *Inſpiration*, not only Unbelievers, but other Sort of Believers, look upon as *Drunkenneſs* of Opinion, and Infatuation. There's the ſame Reaſon the *Chriſtian* Church ſhould be typical, as the *Jewiſh*; for, as my author ſays, *Inaſmuch as the* Jewiſh *Religion did virtually contain the Hopes of the Goſpel, the Religion itſelf was a Prophecy:* So as the *Chriſtian* Religion does virtually contain the Hopes of the Promiſes of Heaven, 'tis itſelf a Prophecy, or a Type of *the better Covenant of good Things to come*; for the Good of it is certainly not yet come, nor ever likely to come to Men, till Men come to Heaven.

The Obſervator takes thoſe Particulars for granted, that he ſhould prove; and argues from thoſe as if already proved, that you muſt take for granted: Thus from their own Accounts of Things he attempts to make their Stories good, which he but attempts; and from Facts not granted, he attempts to prove the grand Fact in Diſpute; which may as well itſelf be granted, as Proofs from the ſame Foundation. This he calls (p. 294.) *a long and ſcrupulous Examination of the ſeveral Particulars which conſtitute the Evidence of the Reſurrection.* And then, ſays he, *I have endeavoured to ſhew, that never were any Facts that could better abide the Teſt*; and concludes, as if he had ſucceeded, that *never was there a Fact more fully proved than the Reſurrection of Chriſt*; when at the ſame Time none was ever leſs, and the *Inconſiſtencies* and *Abſurdities* of the Relations deſtroy all Proof; and wanting its eſſentially neceſſary and natural Proof, has no Proof in Nature. If a Man riſe from the Dead, to be publickly *known*, and was not publickly *ſeen*, his Ends are fruſtrated by his own Inaction, or wrong Action; he is nonſuited for Non-appearance. If *Enemies* as well as *Friends* have no Proof of it, it is but a partial Proof. If *Jeſus* roſe, that Men might believe who were *not* his Diſciples, that End was too weakly effected; for of the *Diſciples* themſelves *ſome doubt-*

ed. What is done in the Dark, wants Light for its Diſcovery.

This Author being reduced by meer Neceſſity to make the Evangeliſts agree; for Facts forms Conjectures; for they do not agree to inſinuate what he does, or countenance his Inſinuations. When one Story, told by ſeveral Perſons, is *irreconcileable*, there is no other Way of Reconciliation, than to ſay *they are different Stories*, and if that Method fail, it had been better never to attempt it. To force a Story to *agree* that *does* not, is like forcing a Story to be *true* that *is* not. They that can reſt ſatisfied with Reports on the Credit of the Reporters, and believe the Poſſibility of Miracles, are capable of believing any Thing, if they believe the Reporters credible Perſons. Nothing is more eaſy than to plant Belief in the Mind before Reaſon ſprings up; and it is difficult in moſt to eradicate it, when it is deeply rooted by long Continuance. This Faith is a Weed that generally choaks the Growth of Reaſon. Is this the Revelation that is to enlighten our Underſtandings, that we cannot underſtand wherein the Light of it conſiſts? that muſt be ſhrouded in Subterfuges of Suppoſitions and Imaginations, to make it ſo much as have the Appearance of that neceſſary Agreement, without which it cannot poſſibly have the leaſt Appearance of Truth?

The Obſervator endeavours to prove the Fact, by the exact Accompliſhment of Chriſt's Words*; tho' a thouſand Proofs, without the Right, will never do; and this alone, is the only ſatisfactory one, *viz.* a Satisfaction given to the People in common. One of his Aſſertions for Proofs is, that *Jeſus foretold his Death and Reſurrection*; tho' he ſhould firſt have cleared up the Objections againſt theſe pretended Predictions in *The Reſurrection conſidered*; in which is plainly ſhewn, that thoſe to whom it is ſaid to be foretold, foreknew nothing of the Matter; conſequently thoſe Predictions were made after, and aſcribed to him; and as that of his *Reſurrection*; ſo was that of his *Death*; for both are put together in the Hiſtory; which *deſtroys the Story of the Watch:* But this very *material Argument*, our Obſervator being not willing to obſerve, paſſes over in Silence. What is the Meaning of this, but that he knew it was wiſeſt ſo to do; for he thought that few who read *The Reſurrection conſidered*, would read his Obſervations on it. To anſwer this ſingle Point, two more ſuch Volumes as his will be too little.

Another Prediction aſcribed to *Jeſus*, that this Author mentions, is *the Treachery of* Judas. But *Jeſus* appeared to have no Foreknowledge of this, when he promiſed that the twelve Apoſtles, ſhould *ſit on twelve Thrones, judging the twelve Tribes of* Iſrael, *Judas* being one; tho' I ſuppoſe *Judas* has loſt his Commiſſion ſince.

The Obſervator does not mention two Prophecies, aſcribed to Chriſt, which ſhould have been fulfilled long ago, but are not yet come to paſs.

1. The Temporalities promiſed his Diſciples for adhering to him, *Mark* x. 30. That *they ſhould receive*

* Page 211.

ceive an hundred fold in this World, for whatever they loſt at that Time, new Relations, and large Inheritances; unleſs they found their new Profeſſion of catching Men inſtead of Fiſh bring them in *Cent. per Cent.* and ſo turn to a very good Account. This was not fulfilled otherwiſe *in this World*, nor is likely to be, even in Faith, unleſs the old exploded Doctrine of the expected *Millenium* be revived.

2. The coming of himſelf in Power and Glory, with all its Signs and Concomitants, which was to have been immediately after the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, *Matth.* xxiv. 29. *Mark* xiii. 24. Notwithſtanding the Diſciples were to endure Perſecutions, they were to be preſent at that Time, either alive or raiſed up from the Dead, 1 *Theſſ.* iv. 13, to the End. *Matth.* xxiv. 4, 15, 23, 25, 33, 42, 44. *Mark* xiii. 5, 7, 9, 18, 21, 23, 29, 33, 35, 37. *Luke* xxi. 8, 9, 12, to 20, 28, 31, 34, 36. and that Generation was not to paſs until all theſe Prophecies were fulfilled; and both Heaven and Earth ſhould ſooner fail than this Prediction, *Matth.* xxiv. 34, 35. *Mark* xiii. 30, 31. *Luke* xxi. 32, 33. and when he ſent forth his Diſciples to preach the Goſpel, he told them (as we read) *Matth.* x. 23. *Ye ſhall not have gone over all the Cities of* Judah, *until the Son of Man be come*; therefore the Apoſtles called it *the laſt Times*, and *the End of the World*.

I ſuppoſe it will be objected, if the Prophecies are not of Chriſt's making, but aſcribed to him afterwards; why have they aſcribed falſe Prophecies to him? For I made the ſame Objection to *Rabbi Nathan*, who returned me this Anſwer.

'The Prophecies that the Meſſiah ſhall be a perſonal King in this World are too plain to admit of any Equivocation, or explain away by Myſtery. It is ſo *expreſly* predicted, that if this is not to be depended on to be literally accompliſhed, there is not any Prophecy to be depended upon; ſo that when we *Jews* are able to give up this, we ſhall give up all the reſt for Chimeras or Impoſition. It was impoſſible to perſuade our Nation otherwiſe, nor did ever *Jeſus* attempt it. Therefore when he was crucified, it was plain he could not be that Meſſiah which was expected. What was then to be done to keep up the forlorn Hopes of the Diſciples? What, but to ſecure his Body where no Eye could ſee it, and give out he was riſen and aſcended in their Sight to Heaven, and that he had promiſed he would come again armed with Power, reward his Adherents, puniſh all his and their Adverſaries, give to his Friends Eſtates and Places under his Government for a thouſand Years, that *Jeruſalem* ſhould be renewed, and the Temple rebuilt, though then ſubjected to the *Gentiles*, and be made the Glory of the whole Earth, and the Seat of univerſal Monarchy. They that believed *Jeſus* was roſe from the Dead, were capable of believing all the reſt: For what is impoſſible to a miraculous Power? And with this Bait the Diſciples catched Men. It is our ſteady Faith in God by his Prophets, and our Faithfulneſs to God's Laws, given to us by *Moſes*, maugre all Perſecutions

'in this World, that keeps us 'ſtill *a diſtinct People from all o-* 'thers; and from thoſe we have 'ſuffered moſt, by whom we ought 'to have been *favoured* moſt; 'thoſe I mean (ſaid he) that *bor-* 'row their Religion from us; 'and have by their own Confeſ- 'ſion *the Means of Salvation from* 'our Race. Admit we did wrong 'in crucifying him, we did it *igno-* 'rantly in Unbelief (for which 'Paul obtained Mercy;) and the 'Goſpel owns, that *it was ſo or-* 'dained to be for your Salvation; 'and what were our Fathers that 'they could withſtand God, if 'we are given over to Infidelity 'and Hardneſs of Heart by him; 'how can we fruſtrate his Will, 'who *does what he will in the Ar-* 'mies of Heaven, and among the 'Inhabitants of the Earth, and 'who can ſtop his Hand, or ſay unto 'him, what doeſt thou?* But we, 'againſt Hope, believe in Hope; 'which proves us to be the *Chil-* 'dren of Abraham; and therefore 'thoſe to whom the Promiſes are 'made.' Then with a ſolemn 'Sigh, and an involuntary Tear 'that dropt as he ſpake, O righ- 'teous Lord Jehovah, ſaid he, re- 'member *Iſrael* thy choſen, and 'Jacob thine Inheritance.' And turned away to weep forth what he could not utter. The moſt ſincere Chriſtian cannot be more ſincere than he.

It argues the utmoſt Partiality and Blindneſs to affirm, as this Author does, (p. 307.) that *the Apoſtles and Evangeliſts were the Authors of the Scriptures whoſe Names they bear; we have the concurrent Atteſtation of all the earlieſt Writers of the Church, deduced by an uninterrupted and uncontrolled Tradition, from the very Times of the Apoſtles, which is ſuch an Authentication of thoſe ſacred Records, as is not to be overturned by bare Preſumption, and a ſurmiſed and unproved Charge of Forgery.* The Charge of Forgery is not a bare Preſumption and Surmiſe: It has been owned by Believers themſelves, as in *the Reſurrection Re-conſidered*, (p. 49, 50.) It is bare Preſumption to aſſert confidently, that we have an uninterrupted and uncontrolled Tradition to the contrary; for there is no Reaſon to preſume it. Beſides, Dr. *Mills*, has diſcovered a Paſſage, giving an Account of *a general Alteration of the four Goſpels*, in the *ſixth* Century, recorded by *Tinuis*, an *African* Biſhop, who flouriſhed in that Age, (ſee *Cave*'s Hiſt. lit. p. 415.) in his *Chronicon*, which was printed by *Caniſius*, at *Ingolſtad*, in 1600, and by *Joſeph Scaliger*, in his Edition of *the Chronicon of* Euſebius. The Paſſage is this: *In the Conſulſhip of* Maſſalia, *at the Command of the Emperor* Anaſtaſius, *the holy Goſpels, as written*, Idiotis Evangeliſtis, *are corrected and amended.* Dr. *Mills* likewiſe tells us, that St. *Iſidore*, Biſhop of *Seville*, relates the ſame in his *Chronicon.* This ſhews how incorrupted our ſacred Records are; and I think that Corruptions or Abſurdities, concerning watching the Sepulchre, are ſo plainly ſhewn, in *the Reſurrection of* Jeſus *conſidered*, as evidently diſplay ſuch Forgeries or Errors from ſome Quarter, which are indefenſible. If they carry this Proof with them, we need not run back for many Ages to prove they have it not, from a Church abounding with Forgery and Corruptions, and every Impiety; and therefore a moſt undoubted incorruptible Repoſitory

poſitory of pure and unſpotted Truth! It is moſt fit and ſatisfactory however, that it's own intrinſic Nature ſhould ſpeak its Worth; let it ſtand the Teſt of human Judgment, and be judged as that ſays Men are to be; *by it's Words be it juſtified or condemned.* I know not whether the ſacred Writings, as they are called, are thoſe of the Writers whoſe Names they bear, or not; and if they are, I know not *who* nor *what* thoſe Men were, but their bare Names only; therefore cannot take Things related on the Credit of I know not who, that were the Relaters. It is not reaſonable I ſhould be obliged to take that for Truth, which has not the Appearance of it, upon Truſt to thoſe that might be either Men cunning or fooliſh, honeſt or diſhoneſt, for aught any Man in the World now knows, or can poſſibly know about them: Therefore I think the Authority that ought to govern our Minds and Manners ſhould be reaſonable, or the Authority of evident Truth and Reaſon only.

Permit me to mention ſomewhat *in Favour of the Evangeliſts*, and conclude; and there is no Doubt, but moſt of my Readers will believe, that for me *ſo to do*, is a Sign of drawing near a Concluſion.

Though the Holy Ghoſt was promiſed to bring all Things to the Remembrance of the Diſciples, he was not always preſent; for St. *Paul* ſays, 1 *Cor.* vii. 12. *Now I ſpeak, not the Lord:* If the Lord had been then preſent, ſure St. *Paul* would have given him the Pre-eminence of Speech, and been ſilent while the Lord ſpoke; and therefore he might not be preſent to the ſacred Hiſtorians, at the Time when they wrote; and ſo Slips and Errors might creep in: And if he was preſent, they were but Men, and therefore fallible; for though the better Half of *Chriſt* was GOD; he was ſubject to the Infirmities of Manhood, and to be provoked to ſay many Things, (*Luke* xi. 53.) which perhaps he would not otherwiſe have ſaid, and which the Writers do not ſeem to have recorded, though *in him* it is ſaid *dwelt the Fulneſs of the Godhead bodily*, (which is not true manifeſtly; for if ſo, all God was in him, and all the Creation beſides ſubſiſted without God, and conſequently exiſted without God, and is independent of him;) yet though it were ſo, the Manhood prevailed over the Godhead, at a Time when the Manhood wanted its Aſſiſtance moſt;—in the Time of his Sufferings. The Apoſtle *Paul*, who boaſted he had as much of the *Holy Ghoſt* as any Man, next to his Maſter, had *Sin always preſent with him.* And if the Holy Ghoſt did bring all Things to the Remembrance of the Writers; yet how could they have Patience to write all that the Holy Ghoſt remembered them of, when St. *John* (xxi. 24, 25.) tells us, that *if all the Things were written that* Jeſus *did, he ſuppoſes that even the World itſelf could not contain the Books that ſhould be written.* And the World now is ſcarce able to bear or regard all the *pros* and *cons* about it. With this I ſhall finiſh, as St. *John* did, who knew when he had ſaid enough; and in ſo doing, imitate the bleſſed Example of one of the greateſt Saints, in one of the very beſt Things done by him.

SUPERNATURALS EXAMINED:

DISSERTATION II.

On Mr. JACKSON's *Letter to* DEISTS: *Shewing the* IMPOSSIBILITY *of* Miracles *and* Prophecies.

In a *Dialogue* between a *Chriſtian* and a *Deiſt*.

The INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE.

C. AT your Requeſt, Sir, I come to pay this friendly Viſit.

D. I thank you, Sir, and am prepared to entertain you in a friendly Manner. In this Arbour fit for Retirement, pray ſit down; let Friends be free; it is the life of Friendſhip; there is not any Thing more agreeable to me than to contemplate and converſe; here is good Wine, which diſcretionally uſed, is fit to keep alive the good Spirit of our Converſation.

C. The Place, the Seaſon, and the Perſon are all pleaſing to me; but what the End may be, I know not, and I fear not; ſeeing the Means are Good.

D. My Mind has conceived, and Labours to be delivered.

C. I am afraid your teeming Mind is big with ſome *monſtrous Production*; let me be neither Midwife, nor Nurſe; but I will ſit by you, while you deliver yourſelf.

D. That will do as well: But that which you raſhly conjecture to be a *Monſter* is *Truth*.

C. Then it is *Truth* gives you Pain.

D. I am only in Pain to be delivered; but it is a pleaſing Pain, like that of *Love*.

C. If you are not big with a *Monſter*, it is a *Miracle*.

D. If you are not a *Chriſtian*, you are a *Conjurer*; you have luckily hit the Nail on the Head; *Miracle* is the Subject: The Hare is ſtarted, and now the Game begins: Let nothing divert us from the Purſuit. Have you read Mr. *Jackſon*'s *Addreſs to* Deiſts?

C. I have.

D. How do you like it?

C. Very well.

D. I am glad of it; then you

are

are to make uſe of his Arguments againſt me: Here is the Book.

C. This looks like giving me both *Sword and Challenge*, which however I do not except againſt, ſeeing *the Weapons of our Warfare are not carnal but ſpiritual.*

D. Well then, if you ſhould be beat with your own Weapons, keep your Temper invulnerable.

C. I am not ſo weak as to ſuffer *you* to wound me: You ſhall find me as *brave* as you are *fierce:* Let your *Light* break forth, your *Fire* cannot hurt me; I have *Chriſtian* Patience.

D. And I have *philoſophical* Temper, which is near of Kin: I have conſidered the Subject in the moſt *unprejudiced* Manner, I am capable; and ſhall always have the greateſt Reſpect for better Judgment when I ſee it; not being fond of *Conqueſt*, for the Sake of *Opinion*; but deſire to be convinced of Truth, and to embrace it, for Truth I love; and regard not whether it be called *Faith*, or *Infidelity*. If the Darkneſs be on my Side, therefore, it is Charity to lead me out of it, who am willing to inform, and be informed, for my own Satisfaction, and the Benefit of thoſe I converſe with.

C. I have always had a good Opinion of your *Sincerity*, but the *Chriſtian* World have but a bad Opinion of your *Sentiments*, I will not call it *Faith*, for in that we find you are wanting, when weighed in the Scales of Chriſtianity.

D. In thoſe Balances, that Side towards him that holds them, always preponderates: I ſolemnly declare, I am *a Lover of Wiſdom*, however *ſmall* may be my Share of it; and I delight in that Underſtanding, which produces a virtuous Freedom and Tranquillity of Mind.

C. The Inequality of *Chriſtian* Judgment that appears to you, proceeds from your Eyes not being enlightened with Faith. You may ſay what you will; but if you do not *believe*, you will not *be believed*; but go on with your Diſh of Diſcourſe, and talk to the Point.

D. I apprehend my intended Subject, which is the IMPOSSIBILITY of *Miracles*, may be a Field for curious Enquiries, and therefore worthy the Conſideration of an inquiſitive Mind, that hunts after the ineſtimable Treaſure of uſeful Knowledge.

C. Great Lights do ſometimes ariſe from ſmall Sparks: That Subject is good which is productive of Good.

D. The *Rage of Enthuſiaſm*, and *Prejudice of Bigotry*, have done much Miſchief, and been the Shame of Religion. This Subject may be a Means to expel in ſome Degree this *Contagion*, that has ſo *infected* the World.

C. You expect great Glory then for your bold Undertaking.

D. Nothing leſs than *immortal!* This is the Ambition of Believers that plead no Merit, and profeſs Humility; and, without flattering Modeſty, Unbelievers are as ambitious as they. THE RESURRECTION CONSIDERED, and the other Treatiſes on that Subject, have obtained an *invincible Conqueſt*, and put all believing Adverſaries to *everlaſting Silence*, and why ſhould not I expect a *Triumph*, if Truth be on my Side? But whether ſo, or not, I joy in the *Liberty* that is productive of Truth,

Truth, the peculiar Glory of THE GEORGEAN REIGN. I intend a philoſophical Enquiry of a general Nature. Let the *Unprejudiced* and *Underſtanding* judge; for ſuch only can diſcern the Difference between the *natural Beauty* and *Power* of *Truth*, and any other Thing, by whatever Name dignified or diſtinguiſhed, wearing its Maſk and Appearance, which paſſes for *Truth* upon *Truſt*. —Mr. *Jackſon*'s Arguments are ſuch as include all that others have ſaid, and more, in Defence of the *Poſſibility of Miracles*; who, undertaking to reaſon with philoſophical Freedom on that Head, I take the Liberty to reſume the Conſideration thereof in the ſame Manner.

C. I think you may be very well reconciled to the *Chriſtian* Religion, in the reaſonable Light Mr. *Jackſon* deſcribes it.

D. He indeed dreſſes it up in the Light of *Deiſm*. If it was its *natural* Complexion, and not a *painted Beauty*, and all true as he repreſents it, *Deiſts* may be perſuaded to believe that *Art* is almoſt as beautiful as *Nature*. Many fine Things may be ſaid of *any* Religion, by Men of Skill, that take only the *beſt* Part, and make the *beſt* of it: But a Religion delivered in an *extraordinary* Manner from God, ſhould be like him, not *partially*, but *totally Good*; not *obſcure* and *intricate*, but *clear* and *plain*, *intelligent* and *harmonious*. If the many *good* Things he ſays about the *Chriſtian* Religion, were *true* as well as *good*, they would exceedingly tend to promote the Honour of it, and reconcile it to them to whom he makes his *Addreſs*.

C. Mr. *Jackſon* ſays, you are "the firſt he knows of, that ever ſaid it was inconſiſtent with the Divine Attributes, and the Rules of Truth and Certainty, that God ſhould work Miracles;" and I think, indeed, you are ſomewhat *ſingular* in this Point, as I have heard by ſeveral.

D. I aſſure you, Sir, I affect not *Singularity*, and ſuppoſe I am not the *only one* that thinks ſo: But it may be a *Novelty* to thoſe that have not conſidered it, that have ſucked in *ſupernatural Nouriſhment* from their *eccleſiaſtical Mothers Breaſts*, and are ſtill delighted with it; but to thoſe that *chew the Cud*, it is *indigeſtible Food*.

C. And you are one of the clean Beaſts! we all feed in our own Way. What is Meat to others, is Bones to you; or, as the common Proverb aptly expreſſes it, One Man's Meat is another Man's Poiſon. But pray, *Sir*, how do you intend to manage this Argument? For you muſt be the Manager. In what Order will you proceed? Let us come to Order, that when one Point is diſcuſſed, we may go upon another.

D. Very well propoſed, Sir; then, in treating this Subject, let the Examination be,

Firſt, *Whether Miracles are conſiſtent with the Courſe of Nature?*

Secondly, *Whether they are conſiſtent with the Attributes of Deity?*

Thirdly, *Whether they are fit or neceſſary?*

Fourthly, *Whether they do not deſtroy the Foundation of Truth and Certainty? And are capable of the ſame Evidence as other hiſtorical Facts?*

Fifthly, *Whether the Diſbelief of Miracles be Infidelity and Atheiſm?*

C. Grand

C. Grand Points! I ſuppoſe you expect to carry all before you. *Audacious* Attempts have often *ſhameful* Overthrows.

D. Fortuna juvat audaces. At the End of every one of theſe mental Entertainments, let a refreſhing Glaſs be adminiſtered to the *outward Man*; for they that would keep their Tenants in their Houſes, muſt keep their Houſes in Repair.

C. While I hear you talk like a *Heathen Philoſopher*, I have no Antipathy to living like a *Chriſtian.*

D. But I ſhall diſcourſe on a good Subject.

C. Many a one does ſo, and makes bad Work of it. However, good Talking ſhould always be attended with good Living.

D. And reaſonable *Thinking* is nouriſhed by reaſonable *Drinking.*

C. I *fall in* with you; and when Friends *fall out*, it is not friendly.

D. That's a ſelf-evident Truth, and needs not our Proof.

C. Nor will it be friendly in us to prove the Truth of it.

D. Thoſe Things that are not proper to prove, it is beſt to take for granted.

C. Do ſo by Miracles.

D. Chriſtians don't Attempt to prove them becauſe they think them *not proper*, but becauſe they *cannot*. That Subject which can neither be *proved* nor *diſproved*, is a very dark one, and ought to be diſmiſſed.

C. That you make not dark Work of it, brighten up your Intellects with a chearful Glaſs.

D. I will do ſo, my Friend; and as I expect no *ſupernatural* Aid, I will make uſe of the *natural*, and diſmiſs this introductory Diſcourſe.

DISCOURSE II.

D. NOW, if you pleaſe, Sir, we will begin with the Enquiry, *Whether Miracles are conſiſtent with the courſe of Nature?*

C. What general Definition do you give of a Miracle?

D. A Miracle has been generally allowed to be a *ſupernatural Operation*, or *the Work of a Power above Nature.*

C. But ſome Moderns think otherwiſe; among them is your Mr. *Jackſon*, whoſe Reaſons are to be my Rule. He ſays, (p. 17.)

'The Courſe of Nature is really 'the immediate inceſſant Operation or Agency of God himſelf in the whole Creation; and 'what is called a *Miracle*, is as 'much a Part of God's providential Government, and as much *a Part of the Courſe of Nature*, as 'any other: The Difference is, 'the ordinary Powers of Nature 'are *viſible* and *manifeſt* in their 'Effects at all Times, and in all 'Places, but the extraordinary, 'at ſome particular Times, by 'Effects ſuperior to human Agency, or common natural Cauſes 'for moral Ends.'

D. What do you think Mr. *Jackſon means* by this? For I would take him by his true Intent and Meaning. *Fair* Argument ſcorns all manner of foul Dealing.

C. I apprehend he means this, that *Miracles* are as much a Part of the Courſe of Nature, as any other natural Productions are; only they are wrought at ſome particular Times, and on ſome extraordinary Occaſions.

D. But every Thing in the Courſe of Nature, ſo far as we can

can judge, has its *Revolution* by the Flux and Reflux of Things; if *Miracles* are a Part of the *Courſe of Nature*, they muſt revolve as the Courſe of Nature does. For, by this Order of Things, *the Thing which has been, is that which ſhall be, and that which is done, is that which ſhall be done, and there is no new Thing under the Sun.* But as this is not true, applied to *Miracles*, ſo there is no Cauſe in *Nature* that can produce them. How does Mr. *Jackſon* know, that *a Miracle is a Part of the Courſe of Nature*; ſince he never wrought nor ſaw one, nor knows any that did? And as he is a Stranger to the Work, he muſt be the ſame as to the Power or Manner of doing it.—Whatever is *accountable* by the Courſe of Nature, is not miraculous; and what is done in an *unaccountable* Manner, who can *account* for?—If a *natural* Work may be done for a *moral* End, or if *falſe* Prophets can work *Miracles*, the *End* for which a Work is wrought, makes it not a *Miracle*: *Morality*, therefore, is no more eſſential to a *Miracle*, than a *Miracle* is eſſential to *Morality*.

C. Mr. *Jackſon* ſays, (p. 19, *&c.*) 'Miracles no more alter Nature, or deſtroy the Laws of it, than the Power and Will of human Agents do.—The Cure of a Man any way diſeaſed, by a Word or a Touch only, is no more contrary to the Courſe of Nature, nor inconſiſtent with it, than the Cure of theſe Diſeaſes by human Means is: Nature is only reſtored in one Caſe, by *extraordinary divine Power*, and in the other by *human Art*. — If human Art can alter the Courſe of Nature, without deſtroying the Laws of Truth or Nature, ſurely we muſt admit, that the Power of God can do ſo in a way ſuperior to human Agency.'

D. I wiſh the Gentleman had told us what he meant by *the Laws of Nature* being altered by *human Art*. In curing Diſeaſes, it is not the Caſe. The beſt Phyſician is only Nature's Handmaid; he cannot cure the leaſt Malady, unleſs Nature lead the Way, and cooperate with his Skill and Endeavours; and by her Aſſiſtance, a *lucky old Woman* may effect a Cure. That a *holy* or a *royal* Touch ever brought ſound Health to a diſtempered Patient, requires *better Proof* than *bare Reports*. This is ſaid to be done by *extraordinary divine Power*, the other by *human Art*; if both theſe are conſiſtent with the *Courſe of Nature*, the Power is *one* and the *ſame*: But this is as hard to *prove* as to *perform*. When we ſee the Thing done, we ſhall be better able to reaſon about it.

C. 'A Reſurrection of dead Bodies is no more contrary to the Nature of Things, than the Reſurrection of dead Corn.'

D. True; for Seeds once dead cannot grow, tho' it be ſaid, *If a Corn of Wheat fall into the Ground, and die not, it abideth alone*, (or is barren) *but if it die, it bringeth forth much Fruit*; tho' this, I ſuppoſe, was according to the Philoſophy of thoſe Times.

C. 'Reaſon will eaſily, if attended to, inform us, that the raiſing a dead Body is as poſſible, as the giving Life to one in a natural Way is; and there is no more ſuperior Power exerted in one Caſe, than in the other.—It is the ſame Divine Power which

'which gave Life, and preſerves 'it, that reſtores a dead Body to 'Life again.'

D. It is eaſy to *ſay* and *imagine* Things, but how does this appear to be true? If the one was as *eaſy* to Nature as the other, why ſhould not one be done as *oft* as the other? He owns, that there is no Power but what is according to the Courſe of Nature; but who ever heard, that by the Courſe of Nature, any dead Body ever came to Life again? If there is no more ſuperior Power exerted in one Caſe than in the other, 'tis amazing that ſo many Children ſhould be *daily born*, and that no dead Bodies ever *get up and walk*. Was this Doctrine true, one might reaſonably expect Reſurrections as often as Births. But all the *Reaſon* and *Senſe* Men have, if *attended* to, inform us by *Facts*, that tho' Parents communicate *Life* to their Poſterity in a natural Way, no Body once dead is ever raiſed again to Life, the one is *commonly* and *conſtantly* done, and the other *never*; that it admits of no Proof: How happens this? but becauſe there is a Power in Nature to do the one, and not the other.

C. But is there not a Divine Power that can do it?

D. What, contrary to the Powers of Nature? All ſuch Power was given up before by Mr. *Jackſon*; you hear that even with him, Power natural and divine is the ſame. *It is the ſame Divine Power*, ſays he, *which gave Life and preſerves it, that reſtores a dead Body to Life again*; I grant the *former* is either *natural* or *divine*, as you pleaſe to call it; for *both with me are one*; but there is no Power to do the *latter*, becauſe *not natural*, therefore *not divine*. All the Difference between *natural* and *divine* Power is only as it is applied to *Things natural* or *divine*, the *Power* is the ſame: Therefore this Diſtinction is needleſs, if it is *the ſame divine Power which gave Life, and preſerves it, that reſtores a dead Body to Life again*.—Reaſon cannot inform us, that what is contrary to the Courſe of Nature may be; it is Faith informs us this. If this Courſe be *the immediate inceſſant Operation of God himſelf in the whole Creation*, no *greater* or *different Power* can be, none *more immediate*, or *more inceſſant*, for theſe Words admit of no Degrees of Compariſon; there can then be no *ſupernatural* Interpoſition: By this the *Poſſibility* of all *Miracles* are excluded.

C. That is, if they are contrary to the Courſe of Nature.

D. And ſuch all Miracles are, as by deſcribing them will appear. Thoſe we are required to believe, are not of that Sort as are a Part of the Courſe of Nature; as *the raiſing the Dead to Life*; *the conſtant Motion of the Sun or Earth ſtanding ſtill at the Word of Command*; *the Sun's going back fifteen Degrees, when requeſted*; *a Sea parting, and making two Walls, with a broad Road betwixt, for a Nation to go through between them on dry Ground*; *the growing of Oil in a Cruſe, as faſt as it could be emptied into other Veſſels, till all were full that could be got*; *and the growing of Meal in a Barrel all the Time of a Famine*; *deſtroying Men by Fire from Heaven, at the Word of Command, the Fire not being able to burn ſome Men, nor the Water to drown others: A Man's living three Days in the Belly of a Fiſh in the Sea*; *making Bread and*

Fiſh

Fiſh faſter than ten thouſand hungry People could eat them; ſeeing all the Kingdoms of the round World from the Top of a Mountain, and all this in a Moment; inſpiring illiterate Men, that ſpoke their own Mother Tongue barbarouſly, with Knowledge to talk all Manner of Languages under Heaven, without learning any, and to write in the moſt learned grammatically; and theſe People's enabling others to do the ſame, by only laying their Hands upon their Heads; a Spirit's catching a Man up in the Air, and ſetting him down at a diſtant Town, &c. &c. &c. Such Facts are certainly all *inconſiſtent* with, and ſome of them plainly *contrary* to the general Courſe of Nature.

C. But Mr. *Jackſon* ſays, a Miracle is as much a Part of the Courſe of Nature, as any other Works not miraculous, only more uncommon, and ſuperior to human Agency.

D. If a Miracle be thus defined, all Manner of *ſtrange* and *uncommon* Circumſtances are *miraculous*; and we have Plenty of Miracles in all Ages of one kind or other; but they are not eſteemed *Miracles*, nor any *particular Providence*, but by the moſt Ignorant. He that can do, by natural Powers, what no other Perſon can, only ſhews himſelf to be the *greater Artiſt*. A Diſplay of *Art*, by *natural Power*, is no Demonſtration of *ſupernatural Authority*. What *Credentials* does he ſhew, that he is in a *peculiar Manner* ſent of God, to direct and govern Mankind, who does no more than another Man could do, did he know but his peculiar Art? If this be a ſufficient Qualification to authorize a Man's *Divinity*, every cunning Artificer, who is the Author of a *new Art*, is thus qualified. Is this any *Credential* that he comes from God more than another Man? Are natural Arts any *Teſtimonials* of a Divine Extraction or Commiſſion? Do ſuperior *Arts* inveſt a Man with ſuperior *Divinity*, or prove him to be ſo inveſted? Or is meer *moral Goodneſs*, which is common to all good Men, a Proof of an *uncommon Miſſion* from God? Him that we ought to eſteem *moſt eminently* of God, ſhould *moſt eminently* diſplay thoſe Attributes we adore in the Deity, of Wiſdom, Power, and Goodneſs, equally mixt and manifeſt. What Mr. *Jackſon* aſſerts, that a *miraculous Work is a Part of the Courſe of Nature*, is the better to defend the *Poſſibility* of them in a philoſophical Way of Reaſoning, yet he ſeems obliged to give it up; for as he elſewhere expreſſes it, to work a Miracle is (*p.* 15.) to *alter Nature*, and (*p.* 16.) *to interpoſe a Power otherwiſe than by a natural Means*. The Author of *the Reſurrection cleared*, ſays (*p.* 147.) *a Miracle is contrary to the Courſe of Nature*, and (p. 150.) he calls it *a ſuperceding and ſuſpending the general Courſe of Nature*, and ſays, that it is *the Eſſence of a Miracle to be contrary to the Courſe of Nature*.

C. But 'Miracles make no Alteration in the general Syſtem.'

D. If they did, the general Syſtem of Things would be overturned.

C. Therefore the Laws (or Power) that produce Miracles, injure not the laws of Nature in general; 'becauſe theſe Laws have not 'a *neceſſary Chain of Cauſes and Effects*, or have a neceſſary Dependence on each other, and the 'general Courſe of Things ſtill go

'on

'on in a regular and uniform manner; therefore the rectifying or 'altering the natural Courſe of Things, 'by an immediate, divine, or ſupernatural Power, is only a different Exerciſe of the ſame Power, by which the Courſe of Nature is ſuſtained and preſerved.'

D. All the Variations, or different Exerciſes of Nature's Powers, are owing to the different Means or Circumſtances of Operations; they are conſtantly the ſame, when the Subjects and Circumſtances are the ſame. The *ſame Cauſes* always produce the *ſame Effects*. Nature has no Power to act contrary to her invariable Rule of Action. There is no Power in Man, that can enable him to walk on the Water, as on Land; nor can Water bear his Weight; for it is a Law in Nature, that *all Bodies, ſpecifically heavier than a Fluid, ſink in it, with a Celerity proportionable to the Difference of their Gravities*. If therefore this Law be contradicted, it cannot be occaſioned by a *different Exerciſe* of Nature's Powers, but muſt be aſcribed to *a Power different* than is in Nature. When the Cauſes of Things come to be accounted for by natural Means, however they ſeemed before, they afterwards ceaſe to be accounted Miracles. Such would be the Caſe, if a dead Man could be raiſed to Life, by the Power of Nature or Art; nor would the *Operator* be eſteemed *a Worker of Miracles*, when the Method was known by Practice, tho' it might make the Dead and Living wonder. He that can do by natural Powers, what none elſe can, only ſhews himſelf to be the *greater Artiſt*; but this is no Demonſtration of *ſupernatural Authority*: So that Miracles muſt be by a ſupernatural Power, or they cannot be at all. And I intend to demonſtrate, by *invincible Reaſons*, the *Impoſſibility* of ſuch a Power.

C. But firſt of all make uſe of *natural Power* to recruit your own Ability; for if you do not *inſpire*, you will certainly *expire*: After breathing your *bad* Spirit out, put a little *good* in, that it may be better.

D. With all my Heart, I am deſirous to mend; and you ſhall ſee, that I am willing to become better.

C. I ſee you are, if this be the Way.

D. It is the Way yourſelf preſcribed, and I follow the Preſcription.

C. You are reſolved to agree in being my Patient, when you cannot be my Doctor.

D. That ſo we may agree one Way or another.

DISCOURSE III.

D. HAVING ſignified my Sentiments, that Miracles are not wrought by the Laws of Nature; my next Intention is to ſhew, that *to change the Courſe of Nature, is inconſiſtent with the Attributes of God*.

C. How ſo? 'To ſuppoſe that 'God cannot alter the ſettled 'Laws of Nature, which himſelf 'formed, is a direct and evident 'Contradiction; for if he cannot 'alter them, it is becauſe they 'are eſſentially neceſſary, and in'dependent of him; and then he 'did not form them, or is the 'Author of Nature, which is '*Atheiſm*. This is a demonſtra'tive Proof of the Poſſibility of

'Miracles

'Miracles *a priori*, and the Hiſ-
'tory of Mankind proves the Poſ-
'ſibility of them *a poſteriori*.'

D. God has *ſettled* the Laws of Nature by his *Wiſdom* and *Power*, and therefore cannot alter them conſiſtent with his Perfections: This is a demonſtrative Proof of the Impoſſibility of Miracles *a priori*; and if the *Effects* change, ſo muſt the *Cauſe*: If the *Laws* alter, ſo muſt the *Lawgiver*. This proves the ſame *a poſteriori*; which Hiſtories of Miracles do not, for that, which is the Point in Queſtion, can be no Proof.

C. Pray explain this more fully.

D. To ſuppoſe that God can alter the ſettled Laws of Nature, which himſelf formed, is to ſuppoſe his *Will and Wiſdom mutable*; and that they are not the *beſt Laws* of the *moſt perfect Being*; for if he is the Author of them, they muſt be as *immutable* as he is; ſo that he cannot alter them to make them *better*, and will not alter them to make them *worſe*. Neither of theſe can be agreeable to his Attributes. If the Courſe of Nature is not the *beſt*, the *only beſt*, and *fitteſt* that could be; it is not the Offspring of *perfect Wiſdom*, nor was it ſettled by *Divine Will*; and then God is not the Author of Nature, if the Laws thereof can be altered: For if the Laws of Nature are God's Laws, he cannot alter them in *any Degree*, without being in *ſome Degree* changeable. If all Nature is under the Direction of an *immutable Mind*, what can make a Change in that Direction? God muſt be allowed to be eternal, therefore he neceſſarily exiſts, and is neceſſarily whatever he is; therefore it is not in his own Power to change himſelf; it is his Perfection to be *immutable*; for if his Nature could poſſibly change, it might err; for whatever is changeable, is not perfect. Beſides, an *eternal* and a *perfect Nature* muſt *neceſſarily* be *unchangeable*: And as long as the firſt moving Cauſe is the ſame, all ſubſequent and ſecond Cauſes can never vary.

C. 'If it was inconſiſtent with
'the Attributes of God, to alter
'the ſettled Laws of Nature, this
'World would not have been at
'all, or muſt have been eternal.'

D. It does not follow: For this World, for aught I ſee at preſent, might have been formed out of pre-exiſtent Matter; perhaps out of ſome other worn out World or Worlds, by the common Courſe of Nature, gradually, as the Parts of it are conſtantly growing, changing, and decaying, which ſeems to indicate, that the Nature of the whole, is the ſame as the Nature of all the Parts which compoſe it. As by the Deſtruction of ſome Parts, others are produced, ſo it may be with Worlds. Thus the forming *this World*, may be no more altering Nature, than forming the *Parts* of it, as every World is but *Part* of the Univerſe. We ſee all the Parts perpetually decaying and renewing; and as the Whole is but a Collection of all the Parts, ſo may the greater Parts be as well as the leſſer. Though this is but *Conjecture*, yet what have we of the World's Original that is any Thing elſe? As little do we know of the Production of the World, as a young Child does of his own Production.

C. You argue that God's Perfection conſiſts in his Unchangeableneſs, and that of his Laws, in being

being like the Lawgiver: But the Things that *we make*, would demonſtrate *our Imperfection*, if we could *not* alter them, and make them as we would have them; and in like Manner, therefore, is it not reaſonable to think, that 'the Perfection of the Works of 'God, conſiſts not in making 'them unchangeable; but in rendering them capable of being 'changed by his Power and Will, 'from one Degree of Perfection 'to another; and to ſuit the different Ends and States to which 'he deſigned them in different 'Ages and Durations by his original immutable Counſel and 'Will;—therefore not inconſiſtent with his Unchangeableneſs.'

D. If God, by Length of Duration, becomes *better* or *wiſer* himſelf; then he does wiſely to make his *Works* alterable as his Will is; and if his Will is alterable, he does ſo; this is as a wiſe Man, who is *growing in Wiſdom does:* But if the ſame State of Perfection be always in God, he does always beſt; and has one End and Deſign in every different Age and Duration; and always purſues that one, and the ſame *beſt End and Deſign*, by one and the ſame *beſt Means*; which Man cannot do, becauſe his Wiſdom is not perfect; but perfect Wiſdom and Power can do no otherwiſe than purſue the *beſt* End in the *beſt Manner*; therefore cannot alter either. If God ever determined for moral Ends and Reaſons to interpoſe, if needful, by a different Method, than that of his ſtandard Laws; it muſt be either becauſe he could not foreſee the *Conſequences*, which is like blundering in the Dark; or he foreſaw it would be needful; and then it looks like a Blunder in the Deſign, and Contrivance; or he foreknew and determined his *own Works* ſhould not anſwer his *own Ends*, without his mending Work, which is worſt of all. That God, either *with* or *without Deſign*, let Men alone to go on in their old Way, 'till they were ruined, and could not recover themſelves, nor he them, without extraordinary Interpoſition of ſupernatural Power, is a Suppoſition injurious to the Attributes of the Deity. If God deſigned, at certain Periods of Duration, to mend his ordinary, by an extraordinary Work to procure from Man extraordinary Faith and Dependence on him; it proves indeed they depend on *abſolute Will*, not on *abſolute Wiſdom*; that by his *common* Laws he ſuffered Man to become totally bad, that he might get Honour by mending him, if poſſible, in an *uncommon* Manner. It becomes a wiſe Governor that his Laws be all the ſame, and his Government all of a Piece. Laws that require altering and mending, imply a Defect in the Lawgiver. To confirm this, I ſhall repeat a Paſſage from Mr. *Peter Bayle*, in his Books on Comets, *viz.*

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D. If God, by Length of Duration, becomes *better* or *wiſer* himſelf; then he does wiſely to make his *Works* alterable as his Will is; and if his Will is alterable, he does ſo; this is as a wiſe Man, who is *growing in Wiſdom does:* But if the ſame State of Perfection be always in God, he does always beſt; and has one End and Deſign in every different Age and Duration; and always purſues that one, and the ſame *beſt End and Deſign*, by one and the ſame *beſt Means*; which Man cannot do, becauſe his Wiſdom is not perfect; but perfect Wiſdom and Power can do no otherwiſe than purſue the *beſt* End in the *beſt Manner*; therefore cannot alter either. If God ever determined for moral Ends and Reaſons to interpoſe, if needful, by a different Method, than that of his ſtandard Laws; it muſt be either becauſe he could not foreſee the *Conſequences*, which is like blundering in the Dark; or he foreſaw it would be needful; and then it looks like a Blunder in the Deſign, and Contrivance; or he foreknew and determined his *own Works* ſhould not anſwer his *own Ends*, without his mending Work, which is worſt of all. That God, either *with* or *without Deſign*, let Men alone to go on in their old Way, 'till they were ruined, and could not recover themſelves, nor he them, without extraordinary Interpoſition of ſupernatural Power, is a Suppoſition injurious to the Attributes of the Deity. If God deſigned, at certain Periods of Duration, to mend his ordinary, by an extraordinary Work to procure from Man extraordinary Faith and Dependence on him; it proves indeed they depend on *abſolute Will*, not on *abſolute Wiſdom*; that by his *common* Laws he ſuffered Man to become totally bad, that he might get Honour by mending him, if poſſible, in an *uncommon* Manner. It becomes a wiſe Governor that his Laws be all the ſame, and his Government all of a Piece. Laws that require altering and mending, imply a Defect in the Lawgiver. To confirm this, I ſhall repeat a Paſſage from Mr. *Peter Bayle*, in his Books on Comets, *viz.*

'Nothing is more unworthy a 'general Cauſe, which puts all 'others in Action, by a ſimple 'and uniform Law, than violating this Law at every Turn to 'prevent the Surmiſes and Suppoſitions that weak and ignorant Men may run into. No'thing gives a higher Idea of a 'Prince, than ſeeing him, when 'once he has enacted wholſome 'Laws, maintain them with Vigour towards all, and againſt

'all; without allowing the leaſt 'Reſtriction on the intereſted Re-'commendation of a Favourite, 'or out of Regard to any parti-'cular Perſon. And of all Things 'apt to throw a State into utter 'Confuſion, that which compaſſ-'es the Point moſt effectually, is 'undoubtedly *the diſpenſing with 'eſtabliſhed Laws*; changing, clip-'ping, ſtretching or cramping 'them, according as the private 'Views of Parties find their Ac-'count in ſuch Alterations. It is 'manifeſt beſides, that the Ne-'ceſſity a Legiſlator is under of 'mending his Laws by Explana-'tions, Interpolations, Inſertions 'of Clauſes, and ſometimes a 'downright Repeal, ſuppoſes a 'Narrowneſs of Underſtanding, 'incapable of foreſeeing the In-'conveniencies that muſt ariſe in 'the Execution of thoſe Laws. 'The longer a Law ſubſiſts with-'out Alteration, the more it diſ-'cerns the great and diſtant Views 'of the Legiſlator. Is it fit that 'Almighty God, after he has 'created ſome Cauſes free, and 'others neceſſary, by an Inter-'mixture admirably fitted for 'manifeſting the Wonders of his 'infinite Wiſdom, eſtabliſh Laws 'agreeable to the Nature of thoſe 'free Cauſes, yet ſo little fixed, 'that the next Fit of Spleen or ill 'Humour in any one might en-'tirely ſubvert them to their De-'ſtruction? The Governor of a 'ſmall Town muſt expoſe him-'ſelf to Contempt, if he changed 'his Rules and Orders as often 'as any of the Corporation 'thought fit to grumble. And ſhall 'God, whoſe Laws are calculated 'for a *general Deſign*, that per-'haps what we ſee of the Uni-'verſe is only an Underplot in 'the general Action, be obliged 'to derogate from thoſe Laws, 'becauſe they do not hit one 'Man's Fancy To-day, and an-'other's To-morrow.'

C. But ſuppoſe an original Deſign of proceeding to a greater or other Sort of Perfection in a natural and regular Manner?

D. Then the *Whole* muſt proceed gradually to introduce that *new Syſtem* deſigned in the original Draft; the whole Nature of Things muſt change together to require it. Thus no Room is found in this new Scheme for the Introduction of Miracles; for whatever is by a natural and gradual Proceſs, is not miraculous.

C. Pray come to a Concluſion.

D. I conclude then, that *the Laws of Nature being the Laws of God, they are as unchangeable as he is*, both in the Deſign and Execution; and that a Miracle being contrary to the Courſe of Nature, is inconſiſtent with the Attributes of God; and therefore it is utterly impoſſible, in the Reaſon and Nature of God and Things, that any ſhould be wrought.

I fear, Friend, I have quite tired your *Chriſtian Patience*, you ſeem to be ſomewhat uneaſy.

C. I have had a great deal of *Patience*; I can hardly call it *Chriſtian*, to hear ſo much of ſuch *heathen Philoſophy*.

D. Perhaps your Uneaſineſs has made you wakeful. Many a patient Soul has doſed under the Word preached.

C. Then it has been for want of a quickening Spirit.

D. But that we don't want. Refreſhment exhilerates the Mind. A good Spirit is no Enemy to Philo-

Philoſophy; and you are no Enemy to a good Spirit: So that Philoſophy and you are agreed.

C. I find you are reſolved to make me agree with you by one Means or other. It would expoſe me to juſt Cenſure, ſhould I put a wrong Conſtruction on the good Meaning of my Friend, or blame his Freedom for maintaining what he conceives to be true and good, though I cannot join in the ſame Sentiments. An Attempt to diſcover Truth, and expoſe it to public Trial, is laudable; or the Propagation of Chriſtianity is indefenſible. As every good Chriſtian would have the Liberty to propagate Chriſtianity, becauſe he conceives it to be true, ſo we ſhould do to Men, as we would they ſhould do unto us, (*i. e.*) grant them that Liberty, we ourſelves deſire, of divulging their Sentiments, as we would be indulged in divulging ours.

D. This Liberty Men have a natural Right to, though they are oftentimes unnaturally debarred of it.

DISCOURSE III.

NOW, if you pleaſe, let us enquire, *Whether it be fit or neceſſary for God, at any Time, to work Miracles?* What ſay you in Behalf of it?

C. I ſay this, that 'the providential Government of God is 'that of a *moral Government* over 'free *Agents*, in whoſe Power it is 'to diſturb the natural Syſtem, 'and bring many Evils into it by 'Superſtition, Tyranny, Oppreſſion, Perſecution, Fraud, &c. 'It cannot but be fit for God, as 'a moral Governor, to interpoſe 'his Power to remedy thoſe Evils, 'by delivering and ſupporting 'the injured Innocent and Virtuous, by other than natural 'Means, or the ordinary Courſe 'of Things, and correcting or 'puniſhing the Impious, or Unjuſt, by immediate or extraordinary Acts of his Power.'

D. It ſeems very unfit that God, as a *moral Governor*, ſhould give Man ſo miſchievous a Power, which is capable of diſturbing the *natural Syſtem*, and bringing many Evils into it. But if it was beſt that Man ſhould have ſuch Power, then it is beſt that ſuch Things ſhould be. If it would have been beſt otherwiſe, why was it not? It is better that Evil ſhould not be, than permitted to be, to be remedied. But is it remedied? Surely no. Why then there has been no remedy exhibited. This is making the World dream of a *Doctor*, when it has had none. 'Tis meer Quackery to perſuade Men that *Phyſic* is needful, when none can make them better. Since the Conſtitution of the World is unalterable, to ſay it is wrong, is only complaining of God's Government, or of Providence. When Things are as well as they can be, it is a Folly to grumble and complain.

C. What then, cannot Men be made better?

D. Yes, ſome may, but as to Mankind in general, they are as they ever were, ſome good, ſome bad; ſome growing better, ſome worſe; ſometimes moral, ſometimes immoral; now fooliſh, then wiſe; here they hit the Mark, there blunder; ſleep in this country, and in another ſeem to rouze themſelves out of their Lethargy;

keep awake for a few Ages, and after dream again for a few Ages more; and ſuch like is the Conſtitution of Mankind, and likely ever to be.

C. And is this beſt?

D. Yes certainly, ſince it can't be better, and nothing has ever ſpoiled the Conſtitution of Man more than the falſe Pretenſions of mending it. If God did not like to ſee the World as it is, he would not have made it as it is: For how can he give Being to what diſpleaſes him? This is acting fooliſhly, and making himſelf unhappy. Man complains becauſe *he is offended*, and thinks *God is offended* alſo as he is, becauſe he thinks God is like himſelf: For his Ideas are limited to his Nature and Conſtitution, they go with him wherever he goes; that's the Reaſon Man is ſo inclined to Idolatry, and ſo many falſe Gods have been put upon Man, and have tyrannized over the Mind. *Man* always worſhips *Man*, for he knows no Being above himſelf. If his God has not *human Form and Nature*, he knows not what Form or Nature to aſcribe to his God, and adores he knows not what.

C. What Notion have you then of God?

D. That he is a Being of infinite Perfection, but I confeſs I don't know what it is, but I know what it is not, and againſt that I argue. Perfection I admire and adore.

C. Then you adore you know not what, as well as others.

D. I own it, and the Reaſon is, becauſe I am a *Man* as well as you, and, having *finite* Powers, cannot comprehend what is *infinite*. All Things may be *good*, for aught I know, but I know they are not all *good* to me, for I am not *wholly good*, nor can I ſee them ſo, becauſe I cannot ſee as God does.

C. You ſaid, Man's God is always *in Idea a Man*, or he knows not what he is; but we ſay that God has no Body, Parts, nor Paſſions.

D. So ſay I, but then I cannot deſcribe what that is. And tho' you ſay ſo too, if one tell you that God therefore is not *diſpleaſed*, or cannot be *angry* with Sin, having infinite *Perfection*, (for *Anger* and *Diſpleaſure* are *Imperfections*) you are ſo *diſpleaſed* and *angry* with him that ſays ſo, that he ſeems to you to deny the Being of God.

C. I am not, but muſt own that moſt Men are. However, we do as you do, imagine God to be ſuch as we conceive is fit for a God to be.

D. And that it is fit he ſhould do ſuch Things as you think are fit for him to do. So you make the Syſtem of the World a cobling Piece of Work, and then think it is fit that God ſhould mend it. I won't call this *Atheiſm*, but I think there is little of God in it, or rather nothing becoming him. It is fitting that the wiſeſt Being do Things in the beſt Manner; and having ſo done, it is not fit he ſhould *alter* them.—If the *ordinary* Courſe of Nature is the *immediate Act* of the Power of God, how can it want any *extraordinary* Mending, by any different Act? If it do, it is no Wonder if Things are ever mending, and never mended. — If God *attempted* to mend Man's Nature, and has not done

done it, the *Means* wer e not proper, and his *Attempt* was vain. The Reaſons that make it ſeem fit for God to interpoſe his Power to remedy human Evils once, will make it appear neceſſary for him always to interpoſe.

C. But Hiſtory informs us that he has interpoſed, if there be any Truth in the Hiſtory of Miracles.

D. And done *no Good* by ſuch Interpoſition; this is Slur upon Slur, or Blot upon Blot. Not to do Things well at firſt, then to mend them afterwards, and make them never the better.

C. You miſtake, Things were well made at firſt by the Maker; but Man has made them bad by his *Free-will.*

D. What Pity it is Man ever had Free-will. Can any Thing produce Evil but Evil? If Evil be the Conſequence, what was the Cauſe?

C. Good, the evil Conſequent was accidental.

D. Not deſigned?

C. Not abſolutely, but left in a State of Indifference.

D. Be it ſo; then Man's Evil is not abſolute Evil; it is not Evil to God, but indifferent reſpecting him; what Reaſon is there then for his interpoſing or mending? For, *in this Light*, Things are as God deſigned them, therefore 'tis not fit that God, as a *moral Governor*, ſhould interpoſe his Power to remedy what he thought fit to do, or to enable Man to do, which is all one; for all Man's Power is from his Maker.

C. But Man has *abuſed* his Power, which God fore-knew he would do, and therefore beforehand provided a Remedy.

D. If Man *abuſed* the Power God *gave* him, nothing can better mend the Matter than to *take it away* again; ſince God foreſaw the bad Effects, it had been better to give it with a more ſparing Hand; to have been *leſs generous* would have been *more merciful*: But if it was done, and there was no recalling what was paſt, a *Remedy*, you ſay, was provided; where is the *Remedy?* I ſee none.

C. How ſhould you? 'Tis only ſeen by the Eye of Faith, and you have none; your Light of Reaſon, as you call it, has put that Eye out.

D. I have a *natural*, but not a *miraculous* Faith; becauſe I cannot ſee that Miracles have mended the World, therefore I cannot conceive they were ever wrought: For I believe God does not work in vain. Whatever he is the Cauſe of has its certain Effect. He cannot be diſappointed in his Deſigns. Nor can I believe that Miracles are proper Means to mend Mankind: For Mens Hearts and Actions cannot be *better*, till their Minds are *rationally informed.* Miracles are Works of *Power*, which ſtrike an awe on Men's Minds, but 'tis *clear Reaſon* muſt inform the Judgment. Reaſon is more fit to direct Men's Judgments right, than Works of Wonder; which tho' they make a Mob gape and ſtare, do not *give* them rational Faculties, nor *mend* them; ſince they do not mend the Works of Nature, nor direct Men to a Clue of Reaſoning, as they are independent of the great Chain of Nature. Sudden Surprize and Aſtoniſhment, while it laſts, is more apt to *ſpoil* the thinking Faculty, than *improve* it. At beſt, this Curb to Nature laſts no longer than the Surprize affects the Paſ-

ſions, which is *vague*; but the Information of the Mind, by natural Deductions and Demonſtration, is *permanent*. That cannot mend the *Heart* in a *moral* Senſe, which does not mend the *Mind* in an *intelligent* one. If *Virtue* be founded on *Wiſdom*, enlarging Men's intellectual Capacities, and illuminating their Underſtandings, will make them in love with Virtue: But if Men are to be governed by the ſlaviſh Fear of an arbitrary capricious Power, 'tis beſt working on their Paſſions by fearful and wonderful Actions, or the Stories of them, which bewilder their benighted Souls in the intricate Maze, or dark Wilderneſs of a blind Faith. Such Means, therefore, ſo unfit for the End, are not fit for God to uſe. If the *ordinary Courſe* of Things required *Miracles*, the original Contrivance was weak: If it was foreſeen ſuch Patch-work would be neceſſary, why was it not prevented? 'Tis better to prevent Evil than mend it; and to bring in a Bill of *Repairs*, when no *Reparations* are manifeſt, looks too much like *Fraud*. But to ſay, God acts always *wiſeſt* and *beſt*, and that as *He* is, ſo are his *Laws*, *invariably the ſame*, is to ſay the *beſt* we can, and what becomes us *beſt* to ſay; and if ſo, then I think there never was, nor can be any *Miracles*, or Occaſion for them; and we may venture to ſay, God never did what is not fit for him to do.

C. What (p. 17.) 'if God raiſes 'a dead Body for an Evidence of 'his Providence to thoſe who de'ny it, or think him not con'cerned in the Affairs of the 'World, or for a Teſtimony to '*true Religion* againſt an eſtabliſh'ed *Superſtition* and *Idolatry*; is 'not ſuch a Miracle fit for the 'wiſe and good God to work for 'the good of Men? Let any *Deiſt* 'ſhew, if he can, how this is 'contrary to the Laws of Nature, 'or the Reaſon of Things, and 'inconſiſtent with the Divine At'tributes.'

D. If this be *fit*, it muſt be becauſe the common Nature of Things is *unfit* to prove a Deity; but if the Works of God are fit to prove a God, where is the Reaſon that a dead Body ſhould be raiſed to Life, contrary to the Laws of Nature, to ſatisfy *Infidels*? Is it fit that God, to oblige them, ſhould reverſe the Laws of Nature, which himſelf has eſtabliſhed by his *Power*, and ordered by his *Wiſdom*? Is no other Method *proper*, but one ſo *improper*? Of what Importance is this Creature Man, or his Worſhip to God, that to convince him of the Exiſtence, Conduct and Government of his Maker, it is fit that God ſhould alter his Method, and change the Laws of his Government? Is it reaſonable that God ſhould humour Man in ſo fooliſh a Manner, to go out of his own Way of *Wiſdom* to convince Man that he is *wiſe*, and to *govern* the World in a different Manner than he does, to make Man ſenſible that he *governs* it at all? Is it reaſonable that God ſhould go *backward*, in order to prove to Man that he is going *forward*?

C. But every Man ought to believe a Deity.

D. Every Man *muſt* believe what appears to him to be true, and can believe no otherwiſe; therefore Belief cannot be a Duty, no more than 'tis a Duty for all Men to ſee; he that can ſee, will; but he that is blind, cannot. To

make

make Belief *meritorious*, or the want of it *criminal*, is a Mark of Impoſture; for Truth requires a reaſonable Conviction, not a blind Obedience.

C. Well, be that as it will, (p. 15.) 'Men, by abuſing their 'natural Powers, have brought 'ſuch Diſorder into the moral 'State of Man, that his natural 'Powers are too weak to reſtore 'him to anſwer the Ends of Vir-'tue and Religion; therefore a '*ſupernatural Aid*, and a *Divine* '*Teacher*, were neceſſary to re-'form the Corruptions of Man's 'Nature, and reſtore the Know-'ledge and Practice of true Re-'ligion, on which his Happi-'neſs depends.'

D. Mankind was never in ſo lapſed or deplorable a Condition, as to need *ſupernatural* Aid, or had it; for his Manners were never *ſupernaturally* reformed, or otherwiſe than by *natural* Means. Though ſome Men always think *ſtupidly*, and act *wickedly*, yet there are always thoſe that think *wiſely*, and act *juſtly*, who are fit to inſtruct the reſt. Though not one Man is impeccable and infallible, yet there is always *Wiſdom* and *Virtue* enough among the *Whole* to direct the *Whole*: But thoſe only are capable of *Reformation*, who are capable of *Information*. Whom the *cleareſt Reaſons* are ineffectual to *convince*, the *moſt powerful Miracles* cannot *convert*; and if they could, that Converſion muſt be without Conviction, and therefore cannot render them morally juſt and good. Thoſe that pretend to *extraordinary* Aſſiſtance, what *extraordinary* Creatures do they turn out? And what *wonderful good Men* have *wonderful Works* produced? Natural Reaſon was always ſufficient, and always preſent with ſome to inſtruct others. Below Nature's Help, therefore, the human Nature never fell, and conſequently was recoverable by it. In no Age of the World, or Plantation of it, were wiſe and good Men *wholly* wanting, or moral Conduct *unknowable*: Nor in any Part of the World, when Mens Vices were at the higheſt, were they otherwiſe reformed than by *natural Means*, if ever they were reformed at all: For they ſtruggled through and overcame cruel Oppreſſions, Perſecutions, Tyrannies, and Evils of every Kind, by the heroic Exertion of their natural Powers; or for want thereof, fell under the Evils they ſuffered to reign, or were not able to extricate themſelves from. Whoever reads the Hiſtory of Mankind will find, that the common Nature of Man, as well as that of the World, was ever the ſame; and that no ſupernatural Pretenſions have mended it at all. *Wiſdom* and *Folly*, *Learning* and *Ignorance*, *Virtue* and *Vice*, *Slavery* and *Freedom*, ever were, and remain, and rule alternately in *Perſons*, *Places*, and *Kingdoms*. None ever were *wholly good*, or *wholly evil*, but the Superiority of one over the other, by Turns, or in certain Caſes, prevailed. All ſeek their *own Good*, according to their different Conceptions of it, as their different Natures incline to, Motives induce, and Circumſtances permit. This is the fixed Rule of human Conduct.

C. Is there no Room then to hope for ſupernatural Aid, wholly to vanquiſh evil Powers?

D. None. If there was, there could be no evil Power exiſting;

for what natural Power can reſiſt a ſupernatural, that can ſupercede and ſuſpend the general Courſe of Nature? What denominates a Creature free, is the Senſe it has of ſeeking its own imaginary Good. And as each ſeeks its own private or particular Benefit, ſo the Weaker is obliged to give Place to the Stronger, as the Deſtruction of one Body affords Matter and Room for raiſing another out of its Ruins; and as every Thing deſtroys ſome other for its Nouriſhment or Support, ſo no one Thing can be ſupported without Prejudice or Loſs to another. *Hence is the Origin of Good and Evil*, and hence they are both *neceſſary* and *unavoidable*, as Things are conſtituted. And the perpetual Changes all Things inceſſantly undergo, prevent particular Evils from being general, or everlaſting.

C. Are the common, ordinary, or *natural Means* then, fit and ſufficient to enable Men to anſwer the Ends of Virtue and Religion, without *ſupernatural Aſſiſtance.*

D. If the *well-beaten Path of Nature* is not *moſt fit* for Men to travel in, nor ſufficient to lead them to Happineſs, the *Supernatural* is nevertheleſs *unfit* and *inſufficient*, being ſo *myſterious* and *inviſible*, that Men cannot agree *where* or *what* the Path is, and the *Evidences* of it are as *uncertain* and *unknown*; which Men, tho' they ſtrain their Eyes, can never ſee; and thoſe of the quickeſt and ſtrongeſt Sight ſee leaſt. As ſoon as Men in good Earneſt ſet about employing their Powers aright, to examine freely, judge impartially, and act righteouſly, they will find themſelves grow in Judgment and true Virtue, each according to his Ability, by natural Helps, without a *Divine Inſtructor*, or *ſupernatural Aid*, which cannot lead any Man one ſtep beyond what Nature permits, nor ever did: For all pretended Inſpiration, that has found Men Fools, has ever left them ſo. This Sort of God's Government of the World, fully juſtifies him, without affording us *ſupernatural Aſſiſtance*, and teaches Man not to expect it, nor to juſtify himſelf in doing Evil for the Want of it: Though as all Men have not Faculties alike, ſo all Men cannot improve them alike. Moreover, if the *Creature* cannot fruſtrate the *Creator*'s Ends, then Men's natural Powers could never be rendered ſo weak as to fail of effecting it: But if the Creature can *fruſtrate* the Creator's Intentions, God is not *ſufficiently* wiſe and powerful, or Man is *wiſer* than the Omniſcient, and *ſtronger* than the Omnipotent. To ſay then that *Men, by abuſing their natural Powers, have introduced ſuch Diſorder into their moral State, that thoſe Powers are too weak to anſwer the Ends of Virtue and Religion, therefore a ſupernatural Aid was neceſſary*, is imputing *Weakneſs* or *Folly* to God, whether *he intended* Man's natural Powers ſhould anſwer God's Ends, *or did not intend it*; for by the *one* his Intentions are not anſwered, if extraordinary Power be *neceſſary* to rectify it, and by the *other* he did not intend to do what was *neceſſary*. To ſuppoſe God did not intend that *natural Means* ſhould anſwer the Ends of Virtue and Religion, then the *Supernatural* were *always* neceſſary, and ſhould *always*

ways be employed, then *Miracles* and *miraculous Inſpiration* ought *never to ceaſe*. To ſuppoſe God as a *wiſe* and *good Governor*, in eſtabliſhing his Laws, gave his Creatures Liberty to break thro' them, and for that Reaſon was obliged to do ſomething *extraordinary*, and take *new Meaſures* to repair the Breach, that his Deſigns might not be defeated, brings Reflection on the Divine Conduct; for *Wiſdom* never takes a round-about extra-natural Way to do what may be done by a direct and natural. To ſuppoſe that God made no Proviſion againſt a boundleſs Inundation of Miſchief that Man's free Agency might occaſion, but that of altering his Meaſures by *miraculous Interpoſition*, is a weak Suppoſition, and highly injurious to the Honour of God. Every Man's Experience teaches him, this boundleſs Freedom is reſtrained by general Laws and particular Circumſtances. If ſomething *extraordinary* was neceſſary to repair the Breach that Man had made, it was but a very *ordinary* Fence; the Creator had NOT *ſet a Hedge about him, and about all that he had*. If Evil, *deſigned* or *undeſigned* by the Governor, was ſuffered to break through, ſo as to render mighty and wonderful Repairs needful, it highly reflects on the *Conduct* of the *Governor*, and alſo in not *continuing* thoſe Reparations that are ſo highly neceſſary; for many have broke through the Hedge again, and feed on *forbidden Paſture*, ſo that the *ſpiritual Shepherds* threaten them with being *pounded*, becauſe the holy City of the Letter is trodden down by Unbelievers! If Works of Wonder, *miraculous* or *prophetical*, are agreeable to God's Wiſdom and Power, to do or ſay, it muſt reflect on his Goodneſs not to diſplay them *now*, when they are as much wanted, and as neceſſary as ever they were, ſince bad Men are as wicked, Fools are as credulous, Knaves as fraudulent, and honeſt rational Men as unbelieving as ever. Never was more need of the *ſenſible Proof* and *Demonſtration of Miracles*, for they admit of no other Proof. If they are neceſſary in *one* Age, they are neceſſary in *every* Age; for if all Men ſhould *believe the ſame*, they ſhould have the *ſame Grounds* for their *Belief*; but if Reaſon be ſufficient, there is no need of Miracles.

C. I believe you have been copious enough on this Head. Whether your Adverſaries may think the Argument cogent enough, I know not; but, in my Opinion, it is Time to conclude this Diſcourſe.

D. Well then, I ſhall make this Application of my Doctrine (and though I could ſay much more, I will not tire you) that from what has been ſaid, *it appears to be inconſiſtent with the Nature of God, the mundane and human Conſtitution, that Miracles are at all fit or neceſſary*.

C. Now a chearful Glaſs is *neceſſary* for our *Conſtitutions*; I'll begin, and waſh your Doctrine down.

D. This way Fuddle-caps forget out of Church all that they heard in it.

C. It is pardonable, if what they hear is not worth remembering.

D.

D. Or if it ſpoils good Reaſoning, or innocent Mirth.

C. Which we, by Agreement, enjoy.

D. And by this Means agreeably entertain each other.

C. *Truth* and *Good-nature* never diſagree.

D. Happy is the Friendſhip that is founded on theſe.

DISCOURSE IV.

D. WE are now to enquire, *whether Miracles do not deſtroy the Foundation of Truth and Certainty, and are as capable of the ſame Evidence as other hiſtorical Facts.* What have you to ſay on the affirmative Side of the Queſtion?

C. I am authorized to ſay, (p. 21.) that "nothing more expoſes "a Man's Underſtanding, than "to argue, either that *Miracles* "*deſtroy the Law of Nature, and* "*the Foundation of all Truth and* "*Certainty*, and are alſo *inconſiſt-*"*ent with the Divine Attributes*; "or to ſay, that Miracles, which "are the proper Objects of our "Senſes, may not be as well at-"teſted, and with as much Cert-"tainty, as any other Fact what-"ſoever."

D. Miracles have been proved to be Operations *contrary* to the Laws of Nature; therefore they *deſtroy the Foundation of all Truth and Certainty*, for that *only* the Law of Nature is, and they have been alſo ſhewn to be *inconſiſtent with the Divine Attributes.* If a miraculous Story be as *probable* as one that is not miraculous; if a ſupernatural Action be as *poſſible* as a natural one, then it may be as well atteſted as any other Fact. But if Men's Senſes may be *deceived*, or their Underſtanding, which forms their Belief; or if Men may *lye*, may ſee *falſe Viſions*, or ſee the Viſion of their Fancies, and if a Voice may be heard by the Imagination only of the Hearer; which are Things that nobody that has Underſtanding can deny, then *miraculous Stories cannot be atteſted with as much Certainty as any other Facts.* If Miracles are *not* the proper Objects of Senſe, becauſe they cannot poſſibly be at all, then they cannot be atteſted with any Certainty at all. How many People have imagined they have *ſeen, heard, and felt* what never was, and continued to *believe the Reality* of what has been only their own Conceptions? And the more People give Way to *Fancies*; the more *fanciful* they will be; the more Impoſition is given *Place* to, the more *Place* it has in human Minds, and the more they will be impoſed on. How many People have been puniſhed and put to Death for *Witchcraft?* And when there was a Law againſt it, people believed it; but now that Law is annulled, there is *no Witchcraft* to be found: So if *Miracles* were not *believed*, Men would find no Reaſon to *believe* them, for *their Faith is the only Reaſon for the Poſſibility of their Exiſtence.*

C. But ſure "our Senſes are as "good Judges in *miraculous* as in "*common* Caſes, and thoſe Mira-"cles which are the proper Ob-"jects of our Senſes, may be as "well atteſted, and with as much "Certainty as any other Fact."

D. Let us then have ſome *ſenſible* Demonſtration of them, without which our *Senſes* are no Judges; and then it will be Time enough to examine the Judgment

of

of our Senſes. But if Miracles can convert the World, or if all the *believing* Part of the World were to turn *Infidels*, for want of a *ſenſible Miracle*, not one could be produced to ſave the World, or what is more to Chriſtian Prieſts, to ſave their *Livings* and *Dignities*. O! that I could dare any of them to work a Miracle! I am reſolved to do all that lies in my Power to provoke them, either to work Miracles, or to prove the Poſſibility of them.

C. I hope ſome of them will give you a *Rowland for your Oliver*. What a *Goliah* are you, to defy the Armies of the living God!

D. I don't defy the Armies of the *living* God, for I deny there is any ſuch God living that can work Miracles, but, *Elijah*-like, I defy them to prove by a Miracle *their* God is alive, or that *God himſelf* has any Thing to do with *Miracles*, or with *them* in any *extraordinary Manner*.

C. Whatever may be your Opinion, it is certainly the Opinion of others, that (p. 23.) "Miracles are capable of the ſame "Evidence, and have equal Right "to be believed upon human "credible Teſtimony, with any "other hiſtorical Facts."

D. That Teſtimony cannot be *credible* which relates *incredible* Things; therefore the Relaters of ſuch have not an *equal* Right to be believed, as thoſe that relate any other hiſtorical Facts. We are to guard not only againſt being impoſed on *wittingly* by Men that find their Account in deceiving Mankind, but againſt the *unwitting* Deceivers, who have no Intereſt in Deception, but have been deceived themſelves, who have *Faith* and *Zeal* enough to ſwear their own *Fancies* are *Facts*.

C. Such Things are owing to diſtemper'd Imaginations.

D. From which no Man can be ſure he is not liable to at one Time or another.

C. But Impoſture cannot chuſe its Time to play upon us in our unguarded Hours.

D. If it did no Man can be ſecure of his Reaſon: As we ſay, if every Thief knew his Opportunity, no Man could be ſafe.

C. Pray, Sir, ſhew me in a more ample Manner, why Miracles are not capable of the ſame Evidence as other hiſtorical Facts.

D. Becauſe, in many Caſes, we cannot by our *Senſes* be ſo good Judges of them; and if we cannot ſo well truſt to our own *Senſes* in the Caſe, ſurely we ought not to truſt to *Report*; and leſs ſtill to the *Report* of thoſe *Strangers* that *Party* and *Intereſt only* make to be *authentic*. Suppoſe for inſtance, that a *Miracle-monger* and a *dexterous Juggler* both perform *alike Things to Appearance*, tho' the one be *real*, and the other *deluſory*, while the Evidence of the Facts ſeems to be equal on both Sides; who but thoſe that are ſkilled in the *one*, or the *other*, can diſtinguiſh the *one* from the *other*? How many juggling Tricks of heathen and popiſh Prieſts are recorded in Hiſtory for *Miracles*; and other *Impoſitions* for the wonderful Works of their Gods and Saints, all for the Honour and Glory of Religion, and ſometimes to ſubdue Men's Minds to Virtue: Are they capable of the ſame Evidence as other hiſtorical Facts? How eaſy is it for a pious Soul to be induced to believe *notorious Frauds*, that have the

the Face of *Piety*, and ſeem done to promote it! Are the Reports of ſtrange Things, which they are not in a Condition to make a true Judgment of, *equal* to thoſe of other hiſtorical Facts? Tho' *all* hiſtorical Facts recorded are not true, yet there is a vaſt Difference between the *probable* and *improbable*. If a Man tells me he came over *Weſtminſter-Bridge* To-day, it may be true, tho' a little Objection may lie againſt it, becauſe it is not quite finiſhed, which may occaſion ſome further Queſtions, in order to be better ſatisfied of the Truth of it; but if he tells me he took a running Jump, at low Tide, and leapt it over juſt by the Bridge, I know it to be *impoſſible*, therefore a *Lye*, and enquire no more about it. Is this *latter* Story as credible as the *former*? No ſure, tho' I may know the Relater, and know him to be an honeſt Man, that is not uſed to lye; and tho' it be atteſted by many others. I ought to have *extraordinary Evidence*, to induce me to believe *extraordinary Things*, that are *ſupernatural*, which cannot be ſo credible as ordinary Things which are *natural*. In Caſes where there is Difficulty and Danger in truſting to ones *own* Senſes and Judgment, there is much more in truſting to the Senſes and Judgment of *others*, and confiding in *their* Report; therefore ſuch Reports are not as capable of the *ſame* Evidence, nor as fit to be believed as other hiſtorical Facts. Since we are warned againſt the Impoſitions of *falſe* Miracles, we have certainly a Right to enquire what are *true*, and whether any? And therefore we ſhould be *moſt careful* of truſting thoſe that are *moſt capable* of deceiving. Not only the *Hiſtories of Miracles* ſhould be cautiouſly received, but the Performer of them; for as a Man poſſeſſed of uncontrollable Power is not a proper Perſon to be truſted with my *Property*, neither is ſuch a Perſon proper to be *the Director of my Judgment*, who can by his *Power* play upon my *Weakneſs*, by his *Art* impoſe upon my *Underſtanding*, and by his *Tricks* deceive my *Senſes*. A Miracle Worker has it in his Power to do all theſe Things. Men are often deceived *without a Wonder*, but *Wonders* are very capable of deceiving; and therefore a wonder-working Man may be a powerful Deceiver. He that can *alter Things*, or the *Nature* of them in any Caſe, can alſo alter the *Appearances* of Things, by either of which the Rules of *Truth* and *Certainty* are deſtroyed; becauſe either *the Obſerver is deceived*, or there is no Tract left for his *Judgment*; for what *confounds* the Order of Nature muſt *confound* Man's Judgment. When a Point is to be proved by *Miracle*, we give up *Reaſon* to *Authority*, and by the ſame Means, if it can be done, it may raiſe any Sort of *Deity*, or eſtabliſh any *Doctrine*. Suppoſe but the *Power* and *Poſſibility* of Deception in a *miraculous Operator*, which I think may be reaſonably ſuppoſed, and then there is not the ſame Reaſon to believe a Miracle, as in Caſes, where no *Poſſibility* of ſuch Power is; for the *Appearances* of Things are more eaſily changed, than the *Reality* of them? Therefore Miracles are not capable of the *ſame* Evidence, nor have an *equal Right* to be believed as other hiſtorical Facts, let the Evidence be reput-

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ed ever ſo credible. Both a *Miracle-worker* and *the Reporters of Miracles*, are of all Mankind the *leaſt* fit to put Confidence in, and the *moſt* to be guarded againſt; becauſe we ought always to be on our Guard againſt the *Appearance* and *Poſſibility* of *Deception*; therefore the *Miracle-worker*, the *Work*, and *Reporter* have not an *equal* Right to be believed, nor are as credible as other common Facts, by thoſe that would neither be impoſed upon, nor impoſe on others. Common Senſe teaches us, that Stories *probable* and *improbable* are not on the *ſame* Foundation, nor have or deſerve *equal Credit*. Beſides, an eaſy Belief upon *Hearſay*, *a Surprize*, *incurious Enquiry*, *the Fondneſs of Novelty*, *and of telling a ſurprizing Tale*, *loving that others ſhould believe as we do*; add to theſe *downright Fibbing for Pleaſure or Profit*, render *the Stories of Miracles*, *not ſo credible as other hiſtorical Facts*. It is certain, that nothing has been more pernicious and deadly to the Reaſon, Freedom and Happineſs of Mankind, than Men's giving up their Underſtandings to the Faith of wonderful Stories. It has introduced and eſtabliſhed ſpiritual *Tyranny* in *Teachers*, and *Slavery* in *Believers*.

C. But how do Miracles deſtroy the Foundations of Truth and Certainty?

D. Miracles having been ſhewn to be Operations *contrary* to the Courſe of Nature; if that Courſe has been *confounded* once, we know not how often it may be done, nor where the *Confuſion* may end; and then there can be no Dependance on the Courſe of Nature; which are the only Laws to Man of Truth and Certainty; and if what is *invariable* fail, and give us the Lye, what can be depended on? Thoſe Laws that are *certain* to *all Men*, are the *ſame* in *all Ages*; but a miraculous Power breaks thro' thoſe otherwiſe immutable Laws; conſequently, by manifeſting it's *own* Power, manifeſtly deſtroys all *other* Powers, that without ſuch controlling Force are certain and invariable; but if ſubject thereto, *a precarious Power governs all*, *and precarious Evidence muſt direct all*, which clearly deſtroys the Rules of Truth and Certainty. Since *inconſtant* miraculous Interpoſitions do not agree with the *conſtant* Courſe of Nature, that the *Senſes* and *Reaſon* of Man are directed by; they are deſtructive of *rational Principles*, that are founded thereon; therefore *Miracles deſtroy all natural Rules of Truth and Certainty*. If then *all* Certainty conſiſts in *natural* Rules, what Certainty or Foundation have *ſupernatural*? And what the Superſtructures, when the Foundation does not exiſt, or ceaſes to be? Therefore Miracles ſhould exiſt as long as the Doctrines founded thereon.

C. (Page 23.) But it is thought 'very unreaſonable to alledge 'that Miracles muſt be always 'neceſſary to convince Men of 'God's Will, which they were at 'firſt wrought to make known.'

D. What in the Nature of Things cannot be, cannot by the Nature of Things be proved; and being ſo, Miracles are *always* neceſſary to prove themſelves; they being *no Links of the great Chain of Nature*, ſhould have a Chain of their own; for nothing can prove a Miracle but a Miracle. Before the *Reality* of them be admitted by Hiſtory, the *Poſſibility* of them

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ſhould be proved by demonſtrative Facts of the *like Kind*; for I cannot ſee they admit of any *other* Proof. The *uncertain Accounts* of *fallible Tradition* can be none: Such a Foundation many different Religions have laid Claim to, but the Miracles of *one* Party are never owned by thoſe of *another*; therefore *paſt* Miracles require *preſent* to confirm them; nothing elſe can prove their *Poſſibility*; they, being *ſupernatural Acts*, ſurpaſs all *natural Reaſon and Credit*; conſequently require a Confirmation of the ſame Kind. If then they were *ever*, they are *always* neceſſary. Are they not as neceſſary *now* to propagate the Goſpel in *America*, as they were *once* in *Aſia*? Is not the *Reaſon* the ſame in *one* Place as in *another*, when the *End* is the ſame; to produce Faith among thoſe that know not the Goſpel? The *Spaniards* are of that Church which ſtill makes Pretenſion to Miracles; were theſe Pretenſions right, they might have made as many *Converts* in *America*, as their *Cannons* deſtroyed; but this ſhews their *Impoſture*, becauſe they made no Uſe of this pretended *Power*, *when* and *where* it was moſt wanted. And, as for us, we do nothing to convert them, our Miſſionaries leaving their miraculous Power behind them, and not carrying Reaſons ſufficient to repel their Objections. But what think you? are Miracles productive of Faith, or does Faith produce Miracles?

C. They ſtrengthen each other; we read, *theſe Things were done that you might believe:* Thus Miracles produce Faith; and Faith is ſaid to be productive of Miracles; *all Things are poſſible to him that believeth.*

D. An evangelical Circle! *Faith* and *Miracles* hang together; ſo where there is no *Faith*, there are no *Miracles*; and if where there are no *Miracles* there is no *Faith*; this infidel Generation is not to be wondered at. If *Faith attends* the Power of working *Miracles*, and Miracles *attend* on *Faith*: If there be *Faith* now, there muſt be *Miracles* now; for if Faith be the ſame it *uſed to be*, it may do what it *uſed to do*; and Believers may work Miracles as well *now*, as they did in *former Times*. If they cannot *now*, why ſhould we believe they *ever* did; for if the *ſame Faith* remains, the *ſame Power* remains; if it do not, Faith is become impotent and vain. If Faith is the *ſame* it ever was, it *never* did work Miracles, becauſe it cannot *now*. If Faith *now* is not the ſame it *was*, it is not the *true* Faith. If it does not produce the *Works* of Faith, it is dead; and ſurely it may be ſaid to ſuch, *your Faith is vain, and ye are yet in your Sins.* Faith founded on Supernaturals ſhould be attended by ſupernatural Evidence. Therefore there is always the ſame Neceſſity for their being; and there is as much Reaſon to expect them *now*, as to believe they were *formerly*; otherwiſe if Faith could perform Wonders *once*, and can or cannot produce the ſame Sort of Fruits *now*, it is a Miracle there is no Miracle; becauſe if it naturally can, yet cannot, becauſe it does not; and if it cannot, the ſame Faith yet is, and is not. If one ſhould from hence conclude, that there is not the leaſt Grain of *true Faith* exiſting, one would think it is enough to make *Believers* look about them. --Hence it appears, that the Hiſto-

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ry of Miracles require an Evidence of the *ſame Kind* to render the Credibility of them reaſonable.

C. You will never perſuade *Believers* to this.

D. And *Unbelievers* will never be perſuaded otherwiſe.

C. Then there is no *reconciling* them: What have you been doing all this while?

D. Only ſhewing the *Difference* there is between them.

C. And that is as great as the *Gulf* that is between *Heaven* and *Hell.*

D. But the Gulph is navigable from *C.* to *D.* if *Reaſon* be the Pilot.

C. Then you cannot *aſcend* to us.

D. Becauſe we want the *Topſail of Imagination.* It is in vain to ſtrive againſt the Stream of common Senſe, to believe contrary to *Reaſon*, and attempt to act contrary to *Nature*; could we do *that* we ſhould work Miracles.

C. Well then I would have you endeavour to fetch it up with a wet Sail: A few Glaſſes will help Imagination, and ſometimes do Wonders. But Nature and Reaſon teach that there ſhould be no Difference between Friends.

D. The Doctrine is good, let us confirm it. Come on; a laſting Eſtabliſhment to true Friendſhip.

C. I will plight you my Troth.

D. Kiſs Glaſſes, and join Hands.

C. And the Bargain is ſealed.

D. I deliver this as my Act and Deed.

C. It is good in Law.

D. And both Parties are agreed.

DISCOURSE V.

D. NOW let us proceed and enquire, *whether the Diſbelief of Miracles be Irreligion and Atheiſm?*

C. Mr. *Jackſon* thinks it is; and ſays, (page 14.) 'This Author, I ſuppoſe, is not aware, 'that what he hath ſaid againſt 'Miracles is not pleading the 'Cauſe of *Deiſm*, but of *Atheiſm.*'

D. What I have ſaid againſt Miracles, is in Vindication of the *Divine Attributes*, and Sentiments drawn from the *Perfections of the Deity*; which though they deſtroy the *Poſſibility* of Miracles, is not pleading the Cauſe of *Atheiſm.*

C. (Page 15.) He ſays, 'To 'ſuppoſe that God cannot alter 'the ſettled Laws of Nature, 'which he himſelf formed is a 'direct and evident Contradiction; for if he cannot alter 'them, it muſt be becauſe they 'are eſſentially neceſſary and independent of him; and then he 'did not form them, or is the 'Author of Nature, which is *Atheiſm.*'

D. Mr. *Jackſon* might as well argue, that if God cannot change his own Will, he is not poſſeſſed of Almighty Power. To ſuppoſe that God can alter the Laws of Nature, formed by his Wiſdom and ſettled by his Power, I conceive to be a *direct* and *evident Contradiction*; becauſe they are immutable Attributes; therefore am far from ſaying God is *not the Author of Nature*, or being guilty of *Atheiſm:* But to ſay God's Power and Wiſdom may be ſo far defeated, ſo as to make it neceſſary for God to alter his Meaſures, makes him *defective* in both *Power* and *Wiſdom.*

C. (Page 16.) 'Surely, (ſays he) 'this Author never conſidered,

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'or *well* conſidered, that the 'providential Government of 'God is that of a *moral* Govern-'ment over *free* Agents; to de-'ny this, is direct and evident '*Atheiſm*, which I would not ſu-'ſpect him guilty of.'

D. Surely Mr. *Jackſon* never well conſidered, that ſeveral Sorts of Chriſtians deny Man's *free Agency*; and that it is too ſevere to charge them all upon that Account *with direct and evident Atheiſm: this I would not ſuſpect him to intend.* How far Man is, or is not *free*, as it is not the Subject of my preſent Enquiry, and has been the Conteſt of Ages, I will not now take upon me to determine; nor do I preſume to be infallible.

C. He adds (page 16, 17.) that 'your Reaſoning by neceſſary 'Conſequence infers either *abſo-'lute Fatality*, and neceſſary fixed 'Courſe of Things, without a '*Deity* operating and preſiding 'in the World; or that there are 'no ſuch *Agents* as *Man* in it, but 'that the Whole of our Being is '*meer paſſive Matter and Motion*, 'either of which ends in *Atheiſm*. 'And again (page 30.) 'All this 'Author's Reaſoning againſt the '*Poſſibility* of Miracles, is not on-'ly weak and unphiloſophical, 'but in Conſequence ſuppoſes a '*Fatality*, and neceſſary Connec-'tion of Cauſes and Effects, in-'dependent of God's Power and 'Will, to be the Laws of Nature, 'which is manifeſt *Atheiſm*.'

D. It is evident from my foregoing Diſcourſe, that *the Laws of Nature are dependent on God's Power and Will*; nor does the Conſequence of denying Miracles infer an *abſolute Fatality*, without a *Deity* co-operating and preſiding in the World. I have granted all along, and reaſoned from Mr. *Jackſon*'s own Principles, that *the Courſe of Nature is the immediate inceſſant Operation or Agency of God himſelf in the whole Creation*; and unleſs *Atheiſm* be inferred from hence, I think I cannot be found guilty of it.

C. This Gentleman concludes, (p. 23.) that "he who does not "believe that God can, or does, "interpoſe in the Affairs of "Men, in the public Concerns of "States and Kingdoms, and in "more private and particular "Caſes alſo, muſt conſequently "think all *Prayer* inſignificant "and uſeleſs, and all religious "Worſhip to be vain; which is "not to be a *Deiſt*, but an *A-*"*theiſt*."

D. I have been uſed to think, that nothing is *Atheiſm*, but the Diſbelief of a *God*, or an *intelligent Cauſe*; but, according to this *Gentleman*'s Opinion, the not believing *Miracles*, or that *God cannot alter his ſettled Laws*, or that *Man is not a free Agent*, or *the Diſbelief of the Force of Prayer*, and the *Interpoſition of a particular Providence*; and, I fear, was he to proceed, he will call it *Atheiſm*, not to believe every Thing that he thinks to be a neceſſary Point in Religion.

C. Well then, I find you are not pleaſed to be thought an *Atheiſt*: But what ſay you to prayer?

D. It is a tender Point.

C. I find then it touches you, and fear you are guilty. Can you lay your Hand upon your Heart, and ſay, *Not Guilty, upon my Honour?*

D. Ay, paſs over this Subject, and let us talk of Honour.

C. It

C. It is going from the Point; no, no, you ſhall not ramble; come, ſpeak to the Accuſation.

D. Pray, urge me not, I beg to be excuſed.

C. No excuſe can be granted: Do you beg to be excuſed, becauſe you embrace a Notion you *cannot* defend? Or are you daſtardly, and *dare not?* Or are your Sentiments unjuſtifiable and wicked, and therefore you *will not*, being willing to indgule a vicious Mind? One of theſe they will be thought to be, unleſs you plead in your own Defence; which is manly and becoming, 'tis what you ought to do; and the World expects you to *be open in your Plea*, as you have been all along on the Subject of Miracles. Is it not better you produce your Reaſons, if you have any, than be condemned unheard? You may poſſibly be in an Error, but by divulging it, you may be better adviſed. Your *free Defence* is therefore required, and your *fooliſh Prayers* muſt be rejected.

D. Juſt ſo it is with Man's Prayers to *Almighty God*. *If we aſk any Thing according to his Will, he heareth us*, that is, he regards us, or anſwers our Prayers then, and then only: But he is not to be reaſoned into it by Man, as I may be by you; the *Creature* cannot direct the *Creator*. *We aſk and receive not, when we aſk amiſs*, for *God*'s Wiſdom is not directed by *ours*; nor is he, who is the Spring of all Motion, moved by *our* Solicitations; nor can he be prevailed upon to govern *us* according to *our* Wills, but his own. *He is of one Mind, and who can change him?* Not the Prayers of Men: He muſt be the moſt changeable of all Beings, if their Prayers could prevail. *His* Meaſures are not altered by *our* Supplications; nor is *his* Conduct by *our* Entreaties. God requires not *our* beſt Informations, Directions, or Sollicitations, in any Point that concerns *his* governing the World, or *us*. I cannot believe we are wiſe enough to counſel *him*, or that *we* can by any Means, induce *him* to do, or refrain the doing, whatever *his* Will or Wiſdom directs, whether *we* petition for or *againſt* it. It is not conſiſtent with the Attributes of God, to regard the Prayers of all the Men in the World together, to ſuſpend or ſupercede one Tittle of the Laws of Nature, the Production of his unalterable Wiſdom and eternal Will, or to do any Thing contrary to his immutable Rule of Action. It is a higher Degree of Piety and Obedience, and the humbleſt Adoration of the Deity, to ſubmit to his Judgment what is beſt for us, than to direct it by our Prayers.

C. Wiſdom and *Virtue* are fit for Man to *pray for*, and for God, as a *wiſe* and *good* Being, to *give*. St. *James* ſays, *If any Man want Wiſdom, let him aſk of God, who gives to all Men liberally, and upbraideth not*. Surely it is *laudable* to pray for Things *lawful*.

D. It is a Sign of a *good Mind* to deſire *good Things*, and as the Mind is ardently concerned to acquire thoſe good Things it pants after, it will uſe its *utmoſt Endeavours* to obtain them by all the Means in its Power: What it is in Circumſtances of attaining, it will attain, by making *proper* Uſe of its *beſt* Abilities *rightly* applied; but theſe Things do not come by *Prayer*. Prayer is only the Diſco-

very, or rather the Overflowing of a pious Zeal to that good Thing thirſted after, if it be fervent and ſincere; if not, it is no Prayer at all. Prayer ſhews the Powers of the Soul are ſet to work, and according to its Fervour and Power, it will ſeek all Ways to effect its End, and, if poſſible, do it ſome Way: But it is wrong to expect Things in a wrong Way. If Wiſdom could be had by Prayer, at leaſt by vocal Prayer, I think even all Men would be wiſe: But the *Ugly* may as well pray for *Beauty*, and have it, as thoſe that have no natural Capacity for Wiſdom, to obtain it by Prayer. *Wiſdom* is not attainable but by *much Labour of the Mind*; *Reading*, *Experience*, *Obſervation*, *Converſation*, *Cogitation*, *and Care*, are the proper Means; without theſe, or ſome of theſe, it is impoſſible to be had; to which a natural Ability muſt be joined, or Faculty of Underſtanding. And *Virtue* is acquired by exerting, in a proper Manner, at proper Seaſons, thoſe uſeful Parts and Qualities, as alone can diſtinguiſh and diſplay *the friendly and benevolent, heroic and magnanimous Nature*. To expect *Wiſdom* or *Virtue* to be poured into the Soul by Prayer, is altogether as vain as for a Huſbandman to expect his Ground ſhould yield him a plentiful Harveſt of Corn, without *Manuring*, *Cultivating*, *and Sowing*, becauſe he devoutly prays for it; or, which will effect as much, the ſacrificing ſome of his laſt Crop in the middle of his Field, or elſewhere.

C. We don't expect Things *natural*, but in a *natural* Way; but *ſupernatural Grace* we expect in a *ſupernatural Way*, by Prayer to God.

D. But if there be nothing ſupernatural, as 'tis reaſonable to believe, if there be no ſupernatural Proof of it, then every Thing is to be expected in a natural Way. Such Prayers are the Effect of *Enthuſiaſm*, and only tend to promote it, by increaſing this Fever of the Mind to keep up the Delirium; therefore, in this Caſe, the *oftener* they are *repeated*, and with the *greater Ardour*, 'tis ſo much the worſe.

C. Is all Prayer then in vain, and none to be uſed?

D. When Prayer is well uſed, it is not in vain. It keeps up a Dependence on Deity in the Minds of the People, and ſo may be a Means to help to ſubdue the Mind to Virtue, and Submiſſion to God's Will. It is a Cuſtom that has nothing of Evil in it, if we let every one pray their own Way. In Affliction, it may give Eaſe to the Mind, to vent our Griefs in Cries and Tears. In Affluence, it may have a Tendency to keep the Mind from being too lofty. In a middle State, to keep us in the mean. For Favours received, it becomes Men to be thankful. For Kings, and thoſe in Authority, that have a Right to demand our Prayers, and our Service, it is becoming to ſhew Obedience; and more prudent to join with thoſe that expect or require it, than to ſuffer Injuries for too ſtiff a Non-conformity, or to reſiſt a Power we cannot conquer. We may expreſs our good Wiſhes, as well as wiſh for good Things, but with *Reſignation* to the All-wiſe Director. When by Prayer Men are excited to juſt and proper Action, or to make uſe of right and proper Means,

Means, to obtain in a right Manner what they desire or pray for, without any Expectation of it merely by Prayer, then Prayer is not in vain. We should not expect to change God's Mind, but exert our own. What begins in Prayer, should end in right Action. Praying may be compared to Seamen casting Anchor on a Rock, which having done, they pull as if they would hale the Rock to them, but they hale themselves to the Rock.

C. I understand by this, that in your Opinion it may be fit for the public Devotion of People in Society; and if we pray for what is in the Power of our own Endeavours, and the concurrent Nature of Things to obtain, and make a proper Use of our own Abilities, to answer that End, we may have whatever we request; but if not, we ask and receive not, or pray in vain, as to obtaining any Thing from God, by that Means only.

D. You understand me right. In all other Cases, *Christians* may see how *impotent* is Prayer, in that of *the beloved Son of God, with whom the Father was always well pleased*, as the Gospel expresses it; who though he prayed to be delivered from an intolerable Torment and Ignominy, with the greatest Earnestness and Agonies that ever Man prayed, it was all in vain, he was forced to resign his Will to God's. Our *best Devotion* then is, *Resignation to God's Will*, using our best Endeavours to do what is best to be done; for (James i. 17.) *in God is no Variableness, nor Shadow of Change.* Job xxiii. 13. *He is of one Mind, and who can turn him?* Dan. iv. 5. *He does what he will in the Armies of Heaven, and among the Inhabitants of the Earth, and none can stop his Hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?*

C. Why do you quote *Scripture* for this?

D. To enforce that Truth on your Mind, which to me is true *without Scripture*, and being so, *Scripture* makes it neither more nor less true.

C. But you have said little or nothing on Prophecy: How do you prove the Impossibility of that?

D. This is proved by the former Arguments; for Miracles and Prophecies both standing on a supernatural foundation, if that fall, so must all that is built upon it. If there be no supernatural Power, there can be no Foreknowledge of Things to come, beyond what the Powers and Prospect of Things in Nature afford. And if ever God did inspire Mankind with the Knowledge of future Things, to reclaim Sinners, and convince Unbelievers, the same Reasons remaining as before, Prophecies should still be, if ever they were; for the same Cause will produce the same Effects as well *now* as *formerly*; the same Power, Will, and Wisdom, will always have the same Operations in the same Circumstances. If any Thing has been ineffectual in its Consequences, to answer the Design that set it to work, and therefore it has not been repeated; it has been owing to the want of Wisdom, Foresight and Power, to render it effectual. Prophecies and Miracles, if they are natural Works, would have their Revolutions, as other natural Things have; if they are supernatural Works, as nothing can resist their Being, so

nothing can reſiſt their Conſequences; and whatever can certainly be fore-known, muſt certainly be, and cannot depend upon Things unknown, as the uncertain Events of Man's Free-will; for if it did, it might not be, and ſo could not be certainly fore-known; therefore, they that contend for the one, deſtroy the other. If any Man could be poſſeſſed of the Spirit of God, he muſt be poſſeſſed of all th ſe Qualities the Spirit of God hath, but this is impoſſible; therefore no Man can have the Spirit of God, without which no Man can prophecy.

C. But may not a Man have the *Gifts* and *Graces* of it, in an eminent Degree, communicated to him by the *Spirit*; as we ſee one Man exceeds another in *natural* Wiſdom, why not in *Spiritual?* And why may not God acquaint a Man with future Events, as well as one Man may tell another what he knows will be brought about ſome Time hence, by knowing that Deſign which the other is a Stranger to?

D. Doubtleſs, God may afford *Gifts* and *Graces* to one Man in an eminent Degree above another, in *ſpiritual* Wiſdom, as well as *natural*, but then theſe have the *ſame Foundation.* In the Man 'tis *Ability*, which when applied to natural Things, 'tis called *natural* Wiſdom (acquired is natural too, for 'tis only Nature improved) and 'tis called *ſpiritual* Wiſdom, when Men's Abilities of Underſtanding are applied to Things that are called Spiritual. What is above Nature is above Man, he being a Part of Nature's Productions, therefore in Man can be nothing ſupernatural. All that Man can conceive of God muſt be natural, for he can have no ſupernatural Conceptions; and all that Man can receive from God, muſt be in a natural Way, for out of that, neither God nor Man can find a Path, becauſe there is no ſuch Way caſt up by the Wiſdom or Power of God, as hath been proved. Every Ability in Man is a Gift of God's Spirit or Nature, yet all, as they are natural, come to him in a natural Way, nor can he receive them any other Ways; for his whole Exiſtence and Subſiſtence depend conſtantly on natural Means, every Creature being a Link of the great Chain of Nature, and God any other way has no Relation to Creatures, nor they to him. There is, therefore, nothing can come between Nature and the Creature, or between God and Nature. The Creator is related to the Creature by his Power of Formation, and the Power by the Means, which are all natural and unalterable in the general Scheme and Operation. If there be a greater Power diſcoverable than what appears to be, and ſuch Power be fit to be diſcovered, why is it not? If it be unfit, then *to us* it never can be diſcovered, and conſequently there cannot appear, or be, any greater Power than is apparent; and ſo *almighty Power*, as it has to do with Man or Creatures, cannot be *ſupernatural.* Therefore Prophecies and Miracles have no Foundation in God, but have been created by Man's Imagination in their falſe Ideas of God, or have been made the Abilities of thoſe falſe Gods that Men have ſet up, that their uncontroulable Power might ſtrike profound Awe and

Terror

Terror in the diſtorted Conceptions of their abject Supplicants.

C. I expect your Concluſion.

D. And you ſhall have it. To conclude then; it is clear that the Diſbelief of Miracles and Prophecies is not Atheiſm, but better founded on the Attributes of Deity, than the Belief of them; and that Reaſon, directed by the Evidence of our Senſes, the Nature of God, and of the conſtant Courſe of Things, are better Rules to judge of them, than the idle Wandrings of luxuriant Fancy, the bold Preſumptions of towering Faith, or the vain Pretenſions of Men, that lead to *certain Deluſion*, but no *certain Truth*. And whatever the Evidence for Miracles may be, or be ſuppoſed, I agree with Mr. *Jackſon*, that *they are not equal to Reaſon and natural Truth*. Thus, after all, 'tis confeſſed, that Deiſm, or the Religion of Nature has no Equal, even by thoſe that would ſet up ſomething above it, which is repugnant to it.

C. I think the Church is but little obliged to you for theſe Sentiments.

D. The Church is not injured by them.

C. How ſo?

D. That Church which is eſtabliſhed by Law, will be ſo eſtabliſhed as long as the Law remains; and thoſe Sentiments that are eſtabliſhed by Reaſon and Evidence, will remain as long as the Reaſon and Evidence are clear, and may make their Appearance. Beſides, People will generally adhere to Education and Cuſtom, as they always did; and if enquiring Men did not become *Deiſts*, they would be *Diſſenters*, who, tho' *nearer* in Principle, make a *greater Rent*; for theſe ſet up their Altars, or Worſhip, againſt the Altars of the Church, but *Deiſts* ſet up none, they generally go to Church, and conform to the Devotion in Faſhion. *Contemptible Schiſm* is ſcorned by *Infidelity*. I am ſure the diſſenting Meetings have been leſs filled ſince the Growth of *Deiſm*, than when the Contention was warm between the Church and Diſſenters, in *Sacheverel*'s Time.

C. The *Diſſenters* then are little obliged to *Deiſts*, for thinning their Congregations.

D. They are very much for delivering them from the *Enthuſiaſm of Separation, and ſuffering* on that Account, as the Points in which they differ not being worthy of it, nor likely to produce the expected Reward, ſince their Errors are as great in Principles wherein they *agree*, as in thoſe wherein they *diſagree*; therefore they are obliged to our informing them, that 'tis better to lay aſide *Separation* and *Bigotry*, than ſuffer for rigorouſly oppoſing that *Superſtition*, which they have not Power to ſtand againſt; and if different Judgments offend the Church, the Church may, for its Support, ſeek and execute that Power which will deſtroy it. As Things go on in their preſent eaſy Situation, the Church thrives, and is filled without Compulſion.

C. *Deiſts* are but indifferent *Churchmen*.

D. Intereſt may make them as good as many of the Clergy. Every one, of whatever Religion he is, is ſo made by *Intereſt*, ſpiritual or temporal, real or imaginary. Separate Churches, or Sects, are joined by ſo many diſ-

tinct Intereſts. Give the Clergy their Dues, according to Law, and they may be eaſy, if they can let others be the ſame, whether many or few come to Church; for ſome will come always, and ſome will never come. As People are always differently made, and of different Minds, the Clergy cannot make them all of one Mind; therefore, for them to be ſo eaſy as not to moleſt others by any diſcommendable Methods, will render them more happy in themſelves, more agreeable to others, and better promote the Church's Proſperity, while *Pride* and *Faction* render them contemptible.

C. I ſuppoſe you are now delivered of your Conception, which you believe to be Truth.

D. I am, and do ſo believe; therefore, if I err, it is through Faith and Ignorance, which gegerally go together.

C. Now you err, for it is thro' want of Faith.

D. I have the Faith to believe I do not err in this Point; but, Faith or no Faith, we are all liable to Error, and he is generally the moſt, that thinks himſelf leaſt.

C. So that there is no Security in any State.

D. Becauſe we find *Infallibility* no where; and ſince there is no infallible Judgment in Man, no Man ought to act the Part of an *infallible Judge*, to condemn any Principles, but as he is capable of proving them falſe by the Force of Reaſon; to *that* Authority I appeal, by *that* I deſire to be tried.

C. And may you ſo be by the beſt and moſt impartial Judges, for I will be none in the Affair. Since every one believes what he conceives to be right, and Uncertainty attends all human Concerns, I think all Men ought to be allowed the Freedom of diſcloſing their Opinions, and diſputing for them; that mere Speculations cannot be of any damning Nature; and that not *Notions* of what is right or wrong, but right or wrong *Practice* only makes Men better or worſe, and for that alone they ſhould be valued or deſpiſed. It is my Opinion, that *Truth* and *Liberty* muſt ſtand and fall together; therefore, he that loves the *one*, cannot be an Enemy to the *other*. If your Sentiments are *right*, may they *proſper*; if they are *wrong*, may they be *damned*, but your Soul ſaved.

D. A Glaſs of Conſolation e'er we part; and, dear Neighbour, let the Lips of Truth and Friendſhip kiſs each other.

C. Like Bounty and Benevolence.

D. Philoſophy and Wine refreſh both Soul and Body.

C. Chearful Subjects, when attended with Friendſhip, and carried on with Diſcretion. But, notwithſtanding all your Reaſoning on this Point, I believe you are certainly in an Error; and hope you will be convinced of it, if you are. Miracles have been atteſted by the *beſt* Men in all Ages, and the Poſſibility of them not denied by the *wiſeſt*, to whom I leave the Judgment of theſe Things: Tho' mean Men may diſcloſe neglected Truth; to the Diſcovery of which I wiſh Succeſs, that Honeſty may not be diſcountenanced. Though your Sentiments and mine do not agree, I ſincerely reſpect you as a long and intimate Acquaintance, and therefore, deareſt of dear Friends, adieu.

S U-

SUPERNATURALS EXAMINED.

DISSERTATION III.

REMARKS on PROPHECIES,

Occaſioned by

Mr. *Jackſon*'s LETTER to *DEISTS*.

The INTRODUCTION.

MR. *Jackſon* having finiſhed what he has to ſay in Defence of Miracles, attempts to prove *Miracles* by *Prophecies*; but as neither afford any Proof of themſelves, *i. e.* as one Prophecy cannot prove another, nor one Miracle another, ſo they can be no Proof for one another; Miracles do not prove Prophecies, nor Prophecies Miracles; nor ſhall I follow his laborious Path of Enquiry into the Truth of fulfilling certain Prophecies according to his Senſe of them, which, whether true or falſe, as it has no *infallible Criterion*, I have no Need to quote what he ſays on this Subject, which would make it perplexed and laborious, ſince it may be diſcharged in a few Words.

But firſt indulge me a little on the *Lawfulneſs* of the Enquiry, tho' it be peeping into the *Holy of Holies*, examining the great *Arcanum* of *Enthuſiaſm*, and diſſecting the very *Soul of Prieſtcraft*: 'Tis therefore a tender Point; yet, deſigning Brevity, I muſt not long apologize. In *common* Affairs, 'tis no Crime to doubt and enquire into the Certainty of our Dependencies, that we may not be deceived; Men are blamed that do it not: Is it leſs neceſſary in *uncommon* Affairs, which are ſaid to be moſt material, and where the Deception is greater, and harder to explore?

If Things are *ſacred* becauſe they are *ſecret*, expoſe them, and the Witchcraft is at an End, the Spell is broke, and the Charm has no Force: It is but ſacred Varniſh that appears, they are but pompous Sepulchres in which is nothing but Rottenneſs. The *better* any Thing is, the *more* it will bear Enquiry. The Fraud and Fraudulent are the Fruits and Friends of Darkneſs, and the Religion that will not bear Examination,

nation, is the Kingdom of it. *Truth cometh to the Light that it may be manifeſt.* If Men ſhould know *why* and *what* they believe, they ſhould diſplay both the *Bottom* and the *Building*. Plain Truth cannot be ſeen in the Obſcurity of Myſteries. Like Wiſdom, it delights to appear in Public, it loves Freedom, Openneſs, and plain Dealing. What are called *the Myſteries of the Spirit*, are known to none, for they that think they have it, have no Mark to know it by, but their own fond Imaginations; and its *ſupernatural Proofs* being loſt, there can be no Proof in *Nature* given of it; therefore that *myſterious Spirit* is what every one's Faith or Fancy makes it, who thinks himſelf poſſeſſed of it. This *Manſion* of *Myſtery* is the Pride of Ignorance, the Deluſion of Madmen and Fools, where Enthuſiaſm is born, and future Events brought forth; where Bigots are trained; where the Voice of Reaſon is ſtopt, and Enquiry is confounded.

The better to methodize my Examination, I ſhall conſider,

Firſt, *Of the Difficulties attending the Credit of Prophecies, and their myſterious Predictions.*

Secondly, *Of the Prophets Predictions, Practices, and Illuminations.*

Thirdly, *The Concluſion.*

SECT. I.

Of the Difficulties attending the Credit of Prophecies, and their myſterious Productions.

IF the Senſe of Prophecies, and the fulfilling them, were *clear*, it would redound much to their Credit; but when both are *uncertain*, it muſt greatly leſſen our Regard for them, and Dependence thereon. We have no Means whereby we can be ſatisfied, that ſome Things called Prophecies were not written *after* the Facts which they are ſaid to propheſy of, as the Conqueſt of *Babylon* by *Cyrus*, mentioned by Mr. *Jackſon*, and Dr. *Sykes*; nor is there any Method of Satisfaction concerning the Senſe of obſcure Prophecies, that thoſe in *Daniel*, and the *Revelations* predict what Mr. *Jackſon* inſinuates, or that he, or any Man, hath the right Underſtanding thereof, who have attempted to accommodate *Facts* to *Prophecies*. A vain Attempt! in which Interpreters have never agreed. He owns the great Difficulty of it; and indeed, the great Labour he has taken, ſhews it, if he had not owned it. Does it conſiſt with the *Goodneſs* or *Wiſdom* of God to deliver himſelf in ſuch myſterious Terms, that the *wiſeſt* and *moſt learned* Men, with all their Labour, can never be certain when they come at the Meaning, and moſt own that they cannot agree, becauſe their Underſtandings are confounded in the *Darkneſs* of it; and where there is not ſufficient Light to convince reaſonable Men, their Underſtandings are unenlightened. In *obſcure Prophecies* Men may everlaſtingly puzzle themſelves and others, without any Certainty of ever being in the Right. This is the Caſe of all thoſe Prophecies which Mr. *Jackſon* has given himſelf ſo much Labour about, fetched from *Daniel* and the *Revelations*. If Prophecies are not *commonly* underſtood, or not underſtood by

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common Readers, they were not deſigned for *common Good*. If thoſe of the *Faculty* only underſtand them, they are then only learned Preſcriptions to keep up the Craft and Dignity of the Faculty. If we know not certainly what a Prophecy ſignifies, of what Signification is it? *Common Senſe* is ſufficient for *common Honeſty*, which is plain and open, and delights to ſhew itſelf clear and fair.

By what Means can we be ſure of the certain Times when the particular Prophecies were written? and that we have their uncorrupted Writings? For it is well known that Corruptions have crept into the Text, and that it was the Work of *Ezra* and others, after the *Jews* Captivity, to find out and correct them, as well as they could. If the *Word of God* has been corrupted, there can be little Dependance on the *Word of Man*, or on his Wiſdom or Honeſty to make it pure; for there are certain Degrees of *Prejudice*, *Partiality*, *Intereſt and Ignorance*, that Man cannot ſurmount. The Facts predicted ſhould have been known to be fulfilled by thoſe that knew the Prophets and their Prophecies; unleſs there can be demonſtrative Proof, that the traditional Prophecy could not poſſibly be corrupted. *Oral Tradition* cannot be truſted to in the ſecond or third Generation, ſcarce from a ſecond or third Perſon: The natural Infirmities of Men, generally corrupt it without Intention. It is rare, that *two* or *three* Perſons tell ſo much as the *Senſe* of the Particulars of a Story exactly one after another.

A Prophecy, when delivered, ſhould be ſuch as no human Reaſon could foreſee, nor could poſſibly be any random Gueſs: Then the *Original* or *true Copy* of it ſhould be well witneſſed, and preſerved by Men that had no Intereſt in deceiving the World; if poſſible, in ſuch manner there could be *no Poſſibility* of corrupting or altering it. It ſhould alſo be ſo clear and intelligible, as to admit of *no miſunderſtanding* it. The Circumſtances that come after to paſs, ſhould ſo agree with the plain Prophecy, that it may be as well known to be the fulfilling thereof, as a Man may know his own Face in a Glaſs; or, *Deception* may creep in; the very *Poſſibility* of which therefore ſhould be abſolutely guarded againſt. The better the Chain holds together, the ſtronger it is, extraordinary Caſes muſt have extraordinary Proofs: And after all, when the Thing predicted is paſt, the *Credit* of its Prediction naturally *leſſens*, as *Time increaſes*; becauſe it is well known, that the World is full of Impoſitions: And in the Things of God, there ought not to be the leaſt *Shadow* of it.

Though it is endeavoured to be proved, that ſome of the Prophecies were literally fulfilled; yet if *all* were not, if *ſome* prove falſe, it is a Proof the Prophets were not under the Influence of an infallible Spirit, or not infallibly guided by it: And be the Caſe either Way, we cannot truſt to them in *all* Caſes; and if not in *all* we cannot in *any*, unleſs we can diſtinguiſh thoſe Caſes. If the Prophecies contain *ſome* good and true Things in them, can thoſe recommend them that are not ſo?

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It was obſerved, that there is the greateſt Difficulties in applying Prophecies, which are not clear and explicit to their intended Purpoſe; or in knowing to what Intent or Purpoſe they were given: For Inſtance; what Prophecies ſome apply to the Redemption of the People of God by *Jeſus Chriſt*, others have thought are only applicable to the Redemption of the Jews from the Power of the King of *Aſſyria*, and had Reſpect to the Times they were written in. And tho' ſome of the Prophecies are ſaid to be in *Part* only accompliſhed; in either Caſe the *Parts* are a great way aſunder.

If the Prophets did not propheſy *falſe* Things, they were ſometimes miſunderſtood, and in the greateſt Eſſentials. The Jews expected their Saviour to be a *temporal King*, ſo did the primitive Chriſtians, before and after the Crucifixion of Jeſus; for the *Millenarian Doctrine* of his coming again to reign on the Earth, is ſpoken of in ſeveral Places of the New Teſtament, which was to have been * *immediately after* the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*; and though *the Day and Hour* was not fixed, it was to be before *that Generation paſſed away*, the Diſciples were bid to expect it, watch for it, and be ready, † not for the *Holy Ghoſt*, his Subſtitute; but for *Jeſus* himſelf, and the Manner of his coming was deſcribed; therefore thoſe were called the laſt Days and Times ‡. And though we are told the *Goſpel was firſt to be preached to all Nations*, we are alſo told, that ſo it had then been in the Apoſtles Time §. And Chriſt's temporal Reign on Earth, was the Opinion of the firſt Fathers of the Church, (*viz.*) *Cerinthus*, in the firſt Century, *Papias*, Biſhop of *Hierapolis*, had it from the Chriſtians by oral Tradition. It was alſo embraced by *Juſtin Martyr*, *Irenæus*, *Tertullian*, *Hippolitus*, *Lactantius*, *Theophilus* of *Antioch*, *Methodus*, *Victorinus*, and the moſt illuſtrious of the ancient Fathers, were Advocates for the *Millenium*. It was impoſſible to perſuade the Jews or Jew Chriſtians to the contrary. They expected *Chriſt* according to the Prophets, to ſit on the Throne or Kingdom of *David*, which was a temporal Kingdom, and from *Jeruſalem* he was to adminiſter Judgment to all Nations ‖. The *wiſe Men* that came to ſeek Jeſus underſtood it ſo *†; ſo did the *Angel Gabriel:* Yet we are now told they were all miſtaken, and that his Kingdom is *ſpiritual*; for tho' it was expected to be *worldly*, we are now ſure *his Kingdom is not of this World*, unleſs the eſtabliſhed Chriſtian Churches are a Part of the World, having wordly Power and Grandeur, where his *Deputies* generally rule, as if they never expected King Jeſus would come and call them to Account, except in this happy Age and Country: And they may always be truſted to rule in a tolerable Manner, when and where the *ſpiritual* Power

* Mat. xxiv. 29, 34, 42. Mark xiii. 24, 33, *&c.* Luke xxi. 31, 32, 36. John xxi. 22. Acts i. 11. † Acts iii. 20. 1 Theſſ. iv. 13, *&c.* Heb. x. 37. 1 Pet. iv. 7. 2 Peter iii. ‡ 1 John ii. 18. James v. 7, 8. Jude v. 18. § Acts ii. 5. Col. i. 6, 23. Rom. x. 18.----xvi. 26. ‖ Mat. ii. 2. *† Luke i. 32, 33.

er is ſubject to the *temporal*; and when and where the Savage Fierceneſs of Bigotry for the *Goſpel* is muzzled by the *Law*.

Believers of Prophecies being puzzled to explain them, when the *Letter* of the Prophecy was not parallel to the *Letter* of the Story they applied it, have underſtood, what was wanting to be made out, in an *allegorical, figurative* or *myſtical* manner; ſo they have made a *myſterious* Application to the *Letter* of the Prophecy, or ſome one *myſtical* Prophecy to many very different Caſes; or the *Myſtery* of *one*, to the *Myſtery* of the *other*; and by the *ſpiritual Wire-drawing* of one or all theſe Methods, they always may make out what they pleaſe. If by any of theſe Means the *Expoſitor* by Chance or hard Labour draws a tolerable good Parallel, the *Prophet* gets ſure *Praiſe*; but if he fails, which is oftener the Caſe, the *Expoſitor* gets ſure *Diſgrace*. So difficult has the *Expoſition* generally been, not only to common Underſtandings but to learned Men, that happy is he who has gone into the Battle, and come off without a Scar in his Intellects, or being crippled in his Underſtanding; and ſome have been affected with a Kind of *prophetic Delirium* all their Life-time after.

Wherefore ſhould the *Word of God* be harder to underſtand than the *Word of Man?* Why ſhould that be *myſterious*, which is moſt neceſſary to be *plain?* Why ſhould not God's Word be underſtood in its natural Senſe? How is *Revelation unrevealed* conſiſtent with Divine Wiſdom or Goodneſs, or the Marks or Evidence of either? Does God delight to *puzzle* and *diſtract* human Minds; and purpoſely, as by a Wile, to *deceive* Men's Underſtandings? Is this conſiſtent with the Character of *Goodneſs* and *Truth?* To what Purpoſe *are unknowable Riddles*, or *inexplicable Predictions?* What Knowledge does this convey? Or what Warning do they give us of Things to come, if the Meaning of the Expreſſions are not known? And what Occaſion is there for ſuch Prophecies? *If the Trumpet give an uncertain Sound, who ſhall prepare himſelf for the Battle? So except Words are uttered eaſy to be underſtood, how ſhall it be known what is ſpoken?* If no *Prophecy of Scripture is of any private Interpretation*, it can have no myſtical Meaning. They that ſay *one* Thing, and mean *another*, are not to be depended on, nor regarded. Is it any Mark of Wiſdom in a *Teacher* to utter himſelf in Words, which the *Scholar* with all his endeavours cannot underſtand: And if he by Labour or Chance hopes he has got the right Senſe, yet can never be ſure of it? That which is *good* and *wiſe* need not be aſhamed nor afraid to appear, The Wiſdom that is *hidden*, has not the Face of Wiſdom; her Reſidence is founded on *Knowledge*; but *Myſtery* or *Secrecy* prevents our coming at it. How is it conſiſtent with the *Wiſdom* of God to deliver *Myſteries* to the World, for Men to explain as they can or will, leaving them in the Dark to be eternally toſſed about by their own giddy Conceits, and his Word to be to them *an endleſs Fund of Deception*, and *Maze of Confuſion*, as well as *an everlaſting Bone of Contention?* Where is the Difference between what is

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unintelligible and *Nonſenſe?* When Myſteries prevail, Credulity is Infatuation. Any Writing may be deemed prophetic, if a *myſtical* Interpretation be allowed. Whatever the Spirit teaches, the Letter ſays, *the Time will come when Men will turn their Ears from the Truth, and be turned into Fables.* To put a ſpiritual or *myſtical* Interpretation to a Prophecy, is to make a *Fable* of it. Are not Aſſertions and Prevarications ever preſent where Truth is abſent?— It ſeems as ſtrange, that the *Jews* ſhould not know the Meaning of their own Prophets, and we ſhould; as that a Foreigner, in Tongue and Religion, ſhould underſtand the Articles of our Church, and our Churchmen not underſtand them at all; and yet the Strangers Senſe of theſe Articles ſhould be *forced, foreign,* and *allegorical.* I (as a carnal Man) am apt to think the Knack of Underſtanding the Prophecies and Scriptures, *ſpiritually,* is that of putting what Senſe Men pleaſe upon them, to preſerve their Reputation: So if they can be fulfilled or underſtood in *any* Senſe, the Prophets and Writers keep *their* Characters at the Expence of God's, who by this Means is repreſented *prevaricating* with Mankind, by ſaying one Thing, and meaning a different; or giving out his Oracles in ſuch *dark Enigma's,* that neither Speakers nor Hearers know what is meant, nor have any certain Rule to direct them what is their proper Meaning. To all rational Minds it is apparent, that they who go beyond Things *natural* and *moral,* go beyond their Senſes. This *ſpiritual Senſe,* which is above the Capacity of the *natural* Man, is *the all confounding Senſe of Nature.* The *reaſonable* Reliſh of Things ſpoils an *enthuſiaſtical* Appetite.

If we conſider the *Nature* of ſuch Prophecy, as requires a *ſpiritual* or *myſtical* Interpretation, we ſhall find, that were the Prophets honeſt Men, they did not underſtand what they themſelves meant; for they that are honeſt, will not ſpeak ſo as to *miſlead* and *deceive* their Hearers. If they were not honeſt, they ſpoke one Thing and meant another, whereby they that believed in them were deceived, and puniſhed for being deceived; that is, for their *Faith* and *Sincerity.* So the Jews were *deceived* by their own Prophets? None could be more than they. They thought that *believing* their *Prophets* was *Faith* in *God*; and this *Faith* deceived them, and they are caſt off for being deceived! Unhappy People! to be ſo made by their *Faith,* by which they hope to be ſaved, as well as we! We plainly read, that the Prophets promiſed theſe People, in the Name of God, to ſend them a *Prince,* who ſhould deliver them out of the Power of all their Enemies, and make them *everlaſtingly happy.* No Prophecy is more plain. The Jews believed theſe Prophets were directed by God thus to ſpeak; and they are deceived by thus believing in God: They could underſtand theſe Prophecies no otherwiſe, than according to the *obvious* and *natural* Senſe of the Words delivered. If they had put a *different* Senſe upon them, it would have been eaſily proved they had been to blame; but becauſe they underſtood and believed as they thought

thought in God by his Prophets, in the *moſt apparent Senſe*, he, as we may ſay, has forſaken them! This is a miſerable Reflection! If they are *wrong* in ſo believing, their Prophets were *wrong* in ſo deceiving them. If we aſcribe it to God, it is fathering the *Deception* and the *Deſign* on him. Words that cannot be underſtood, are ſpoken to no Purpoſe; they contain no Revelation or Prophecy: Or if there is any Deſign or Purpoſe by ſuch Utterance, it is a very *deceitful* one.

SECT. II.

Of the PROPHETS *Predictions, Practices and Illuminations.*

WHAT *Confidence* or *Truſt* ought to be repoſed in the Prophecies, will the *more plainly* appear, as the Enquiry is the *more ſoberly*, or *diligently* made. By the Underſtanding and Conduct of the Prophets, the Foundation of Men's Faith in them may be known.

The Writer of the *Pentateuch* tells us *, that God bade *Jacob* go down into *Egypt*, and promiſed that he would certainly *bring him up again*; but he never returned again alive.

Eliſha ſent *Hazael* to *Benhadad*, with a *Lye* in his Mouth. *Say unto him*, (ſaid the Prophet †) *thou mayſt certainly recover*, but he died; and to make the Prophet more knowing than honeſt, he is ſaid to foreknow his Death, and that *Hazael* would take that Opportunity to make himſelf King: And it is ſuſpicious, that he as well had, as followed, the Prophet's Advice, for his own Advantage in deceiving *Benhadad*.

Huldah promiſed King *Joſiah* in the Word of the Lord ‡, that he ſhould *die in Peace*; yet he died in War §. Perhaps his Faith in the Propheteſs made him Foolhardy, which ſhews us the Folly of confiding in Prophecies.

When *Hezekiah* was ſick, *Iſaiah* told him ‖, that he ſhould *ſurely die, and not live*; but *Hezekiah* telling the Lord how good he had been, he ſo wrought upon the Lord, that he promiſed him, by *Iſaiah*, fifteen Years longer Life; therefore it was not *Hezekiah*, but the *Lord* that repented; and how can future Events be foretold, when it may chance the Lord himſelf may change his Mind.

Ezekiel propheſied *†, that *the Lord would bring a Sword upon Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar, and cut off both Man and Beaſt, and that the Land ſhould be deſolate and waſte, from the Tower of Siene to the Border of Ethiopia, ſo as to be utterly uninhabited by Man and Beaſt forty Years.* But there is no Proof that this was ever done, ſince *Nebuchadnezzar* never conquered *Egypt*, as we are informed by any Hiſtory.

When *Jeremiah* came to *Taphannes* in *Egypt*, where the King's Palace was, *Jeremiah* †† was commanded to take great Stones, and hide them in the Clay in the Brick-kiln, and propheſy, that *Nebuchadnezzar ſhould ſet his Throne upon thoſe Stones, and ſpread his Royal Pavilion over them, and ſmite the Land of Egypt*, which no Hiſtory acquaints us ever came to paſs.

* Gen. xlvi. 3, 4. *compared with* Gen. xlix. 23. † 2 Kings x. 10.
‡ 2 Kings xxii. 20. § 2 Kings xxiii. 29. ‖ Iſaiah xxxviii. 1. and 2 Kings xx. 1. *† Ezek. xxix. 19, 20. †† Jerem. xliii. 8, *&c.*

paſs. Though great Pains have been taken by partial Hiſtorians, to attempt the hiſtorical fulfilling of Prophecies, by corrupting what remains of *Egyptian* and *Grecian* Hiſtory, to be made agree with the *Hebrew* Prophets and Hiſtorians, and deſtroying the reſt, yet it never can be proved, that *Nebuchadnezzar* conquered *Egypt* within its own Rivers, according to the Prophecies of *Iſaiah*, *Jeremiah*, and *Ezekiel*; therefore there is Reaſon to believe, the Prophets were as much out in their other Particulars concerning the Deſtruction threatened to all the Nations round about them, as well as in that of their own future Proſperity, except ſome bold and lucky Gueſſes which ſometimes ſaved their Credit. Theſe deluded People ſeem now only reſerved as a Mark to Mankind, *to beware of ſuch Deluſions.*

Not only Deſtruction againſt *Egypt*, by *Nebuchadnezzar*, is alſo propheſied by *Iſaiah*, but againſt her Rivers, (xix. 5, 6, 7, 8.) *Their Waters ſhall fail from the Sea, and the River ſhall be waſted and dried up*, &c. If the Prophet meant what he ſaid, when did this happen? If he did not, what did he mean? If we cannot tell his Meaning, what does the Prophecy ſignify?

The xlivth Chapter of *Jeremiah* was written in *Egypt* againſt *Pharaoh Hophra*, and the xlvith Chapter paſſes for a Prophecy againſt *Pharaoh Necho*, the Grandfather of *Hophra*, concerning an Action done near twenty Years before the xlivth Chapter was written; ſo that either ſome Prophecies were written after the Facts propheſied of, or the Chapters are miſplaced, and by Conſequence, the Prophecies have been modelled and mangled.

Mr. *Jackſon* and Dr. *Sykes* ſay, that *Iſaiah* propheſied the downfal of *Babylon* by *Cyrus*, in a very particular Manner, many Years before *Cyrus* took it. But this being more than can in this Age be known, if we cannot be ſure the Words of the Text are the uncorrupted Words of *Iſaiah*, how can this be a concluſive Evidence of the Truth of Revelation, and of the Antiquity of the Prophecies, ſufficient to remove a juſt Suſpicion of Error, either accidental, or worſe?

It requires a peculiar Faith from a *Chriſtian*, to believe that (great evangelical Prophet, as he is called) *Iſaiah*, ſo long before the Empire of the *Medes*, propheſied of *Cyrus* by Name, but by Name knew not *Jeſus*, nor foretold any Thing of the Religion that came by him; and to ſee that his Prophecies of *Cyrus* were plain and literal, and thoſe concerning *Jeſus*, forced and farfetched from deep Allegories and figurative Speech. Beſides, if all thoſe Particulars concerning *Babylon*, mentioned by theſe Gentlemen, were truly foretold ſo long before, and ſo exactly came to paſs; where is the Free-will of Man? Since the Reſult of one free human Action might have broke every Link of the Chain to Pieces, or fruſtrated every Particular of the Prophecies.

The xxxvith, xxxviith, and xxxixth Chapters of *Iſaiah*, are almoſt Word for Word the ſame as the *2 Kings* xviiith, xixth, and xxth. Was the *Prophet* the ſame as the *Hiſtorian?* If ſo, to foretel and

and fulfil was eaſy; if not, there muſt have been ſome borrowing or blundering in the Caſe; if borrowing, it might be to accommodate *Facts* to *Prophecies*, or *Prophecies* to *Facts*; if blundering, there is no knowing how theſe Writings have been managed; conſequently, there is the leſs Reaſon to depend on their being *correct* or *genuine*. 'Tis certain, the *Hiſtorian*, by his Spirit, was a *Prophet*, or one of that Party, and guilty of Errors and Partiality, as any impartial Man may ſee, which makes him a *bad Hiſtorian* and *Prophet*. There can be no greater Proof againſt the Value and Validity of any Writings, than that their intrinſic Purity and conſiſtent Harmony is wanting; ſuch ſtand ſelf-condemned, and need no Evidence againſt their own Infallibility and Truth, but their own Contents.

It is natural to believe, that thoſe whom *Deity* inſpires ſhould have juſter Notions of him that inſpires them, than thoſe that are uninſpired, or lay no Claim to ſuch Pretenſions; and that the Teachers of the Worſhip of the *true* God, ſhould have better and brighter Notions of him than Prieſts of *falſe* Gods. It is aſſerted by our Divines, that the *heathen* Philoſophers could never, by their human Abilities, attain to ſuch refined Sentiments of *Deity*, as thoſe that were taught by him; and indeed, if they could, of what *ſuperior Excellence* is Inſpiration? But in this we may find ourſelves deceived. Inſpiration ſcorns the Compariſon, and very juſtly, for 'twill ſuffer very much by it, 'twill eclipſe its pretended ſuperior Glory. For if we take a Survey of the Sentiments of the Prophets, we ſhall find, that if they were *good* Men, (which I will not now call in Queſtion, ſince good Men may be miſtaken) yet nothing was more common for them, than to ſet their God on the Stool of Repentance. One of the inſpired Writers tells us, (*Gen.* vi. 6.) that *it repented the Lord he had made Man, and it grieved him to the Heart*; O poor Lord! therefore he deſtroyed all Mankind by a Flood, yet planted a new Race from the rebellious Root; as if it could be expected that the *ſame Tree* would not always bring forth the *ſame Manner of Fruit*, by which Means the World was nothing mended. God might, conſiſtently with his repenting, have been repreſented as trying to mend his Hand, by making other Sort of Creatures; and if they had not anſwered his Expectations, he might have deſtroyed them again, and again tried to mend the Matter, by a Creation of other ſort of Animals. But if God repented his making *Man*; why did he not repent the making *Serpents*, *Lions*, *Tygers*, *Wolves*, *Vultures*, and other voracious and carniverous Creatures, whoſe Living and Happineſs depends upon deſtroying the Lives and Happineſs of others?

Again, we are told by the ſame Inſpiration, *Exod.* xxxi. 17. that after God had made the World, *he reſted, and was refreſhed.* He could have done no more, if he had made it all in one Day, provided his Strength could have held out; for this repreſents him *tired*, and conſequently *weakened* with the Fatigue. Did *Inſpiration* dictate this? What could a Man ſay worſe that was uninſpired? What

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Idea does this convey of *Omnipotence*, that it ſhould require a Day to reſt, and want Refreſhment.

The Lord is ſaid to make the *Iſraelites* groan for their Idolatry, and then their Groaning brought him to Repentance; and that tho' he brought them out of *Egypt* by his *great Power*, to make them a peculiar Nation; by his *great Power* he would have deſtroyed them in his *great Wrath*, if *Moſes* had not pacified him, reaſoned the Caſe with him, told him the Conſequences of ſo raſh an Action, and perſuaded him better, (*Exod.* xxxii. 9, to 14.) According to *Moſes*'s Repreſentation of Things, the Lord would have loſt his Reputation among the *Egyptians*, and forſwore himſelf, if he had acted according to the angry Mood he was then in. Let thoſe Readers that think theſe Things little better than *Blaſphemy* know, that the *Blaſphemy* is the *Writer of the Penteteuch*, and not *mine*. I only ſet the Writer in a clear Light. Theſe Things ſhew what the Prophet's Notions of God were.

We are entertained with more refined Notions of Deity by a *Heathen Prieſt*, (Numbers xxiii. 19.) *God is not a Man, that he ſhould lye; nor the Son of Man, that he ſhould repent: Hath he ſaid, and ſhall he not do it? Or, hath he ſpoken, and ſhall he not make it good?* And tho' ſomething like this is expreſſed by *Samuel* xv. 29. *The Strength of Iſrael will not lye nor repent: for he is not a Man, that he ſhould repent*; it appears to mean no more, than that God would do what he *then* promiſed, and would not repent of what he *then* intended to do, but that he repented of what he *had* done; for we are, by the ſame Prophet, at the ſame Time, told, *ver.* 11 and 35. *It repented the Lord that he had made Saul King.* This is not to be wondered at, if we conſider, that the Lord and the Prophet were one and the ſame, and that the Prophet gave the People a King with great Reluctancy; for it abridged his Power, therefore *Samuel* was reſolved to plague both King and People, being ſtung with Envy, after *Saul*'s and *Jonathan*'s Succeſs againſt the *Philiſtines:* And to ſhew the Power he was yet poſſeſſed of, and not willing to part with, he ſends *Saul* on a bloody Meſſage, to deſtroy a neighbouring People, againſt whom they had not ſo much as any Pretence of Quarrel; therefore, what they had done four hundred Years before, was alledged for a Reaſon, 1 *Sam.* xv. ver. 2. *Thus ſaith the Lord of Hoſts* (ſaid *Samuel*) *I remember that which Amalek did to Iſrael, how he laid Wait for him in the Way, when he came up from Egypt: Now go and ſmite Amalek, and utterly deſtroy all that they have, and ſpare them not; but ſlay both Man and Woman, Infant and Suckling, Ox and Sheep, Camel and Aſs.* A bloody Commiſſion! What had *Amalek* done to the *Iſraelites*, when they came out of *Egypt?* We are told, *Exod.* xvii. when the *Iſraelites* came upon their Borders, they came out to drive them away, and fought with them, and there was a Battle 'till the going down of the Sun; and tho' the *Iſraelites* had the better of it, by the Inchantment of *Moſes* holding up his Hand, they thought it beſt to get off in the Dark; and not having had ſufficient Revenge,

venge, (which looks as if they had the worſt of it, for double Revenge is deſperate Malice) the Lord is ſaid to ſay to *Moſes*, *Write this for a Memorial in a Book*; hence the Remembrance of it was continued; no Wonder then the Lord ſaid, *I remember what Amalek did to Iſrael.* Well, what was to be written? *I will utterly put out the Remembrance of Amalek from under Heaven.* No doubt but that Lord, or that Spirit, would have done it *then*, if it could; but being unable at that Time, *ſwore*, ver. 16. he *would have War with Amalek from Generation to Generation.* Therefore the Record ſtands in *Deut.* xxv. 17, 18, 19. *Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the Way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; how he met thee by the Way, and ſmote the Hindmoſt of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou waſt faint, and weary, and he feared not God. Therefore it ſhall be, when the Lord thy God hath given thee Reſt from all thine Enemies round about, in the Land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an Inheritance to poſſeſs it, that thou ſhalt blot out the Remembrance of Amalek from under Heaven, thou ſhalt not forget it.* Why? what ſhould *Amalek* have done? What, but *met Iſrael with Bread and Water in the Way, when they came from Egypt*, Deut. xxiii. 4. Inſtead of doing ſo, when the *Iſraelites* came on their Borders, *Amalek* attacked them, drove them off, and fell upon their Rear; therefore, to comfort *Iſrael* after their Defeat, *Moſes* tells them, they ſhould deſtroy them as ſoon as they had Power. *Samuel* makes a Handle of this, to foment War, that the King and People might be abhorred by their Neighbours, and plagued for clipping *his* Power, and that of the *Prieſthood*, in deſiring a kingly Government: Therefore the Faction of the Prieſts was on the Side of *Samuel* againſt *Saul*; and *Samuel* to ſow Diſcord among the People, to vex the King, and keep up the Spirit of the *Eccleſiaſtic Faction*, and to give it ſuch a Head as might bring in many of the People to their Party, who were for a kingly Government, he determines to encourage *Rebellion*, and ſet up a *Pretender*, which does not appear to have been contrived by the Prophet from a *Love to David*, but from an *Enmity to Saul*; therefore this *High Prieſt* goes and *ſanctifies Treaſon* under the Colour of *Religion*, and excuſes himſelf by laying his *Lyes* on God, after he had moſt cruelly hewed alive *Agag*, King of the *Amalekites*, *Saul*'s Priſoner, and, in a moſt bloody and barbarous Manner, chopt him in Pieces; and as it is ſaid to be done *before the Lord in Gilgal*, I ſuppoſe it to be upon an Altar there; this is an Expreſſion to *ſanctify Inhumanity*.

Can any Man read the Story, and be ſo ſtupid as to fancy he ſees the *Lord's Hand* in it, and not rather the *Devil's cloven Foot* of Prieſtcraft? 1 *Sam.* xvi. 1, 2, 3, 4. *And the Lord ſaid unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul,* (Hypocriſy!) *ſeeing I have rejected him from reigning over Iſrael*; (why then did he ſuffer him to reign any longer?) *fill thine Horn with Oil,* (holy anointing Oil!) *and go, I will ſend thee to Jeſſe the Bethlemite, for I have provided me a King among his Sons. And Samuel ſaid, How can I go? if Saul hear it, he will kill me* (and deſervedly.)

vedly.) *And the Lord ſaid, Take an Heifer with thee, and ſay, I am come to ſacrifice to the Lord*, &c. What an excellent Cover for *Treaſon*, *Rebellion*, and *Villainy*, is the *Hypocriſy* of *Religion!* and this of the *Lord*'s Contrivance too! *Prieſts* always bring *him* or the *Church* (which is all one with them) into the Plot. If it had not been thought, at that Time, the Lord could have profaned his own Service by Commandment, the Writer could not have been ſo fooliſh, as to confeſs ſo much of the *Wickedneſs* of the *Prieſt*, and *Folly* of the *People!* To ſuch a *Pitch of Power* was the one aſcended, as to *perſuade* any Thing! and to ſuch a *Depth of Stupidity* were the People fallen, as to *believe* any Thing! But this artful Contrivance of *Samuel*'s, and his Declaration, that *it repented the Lord he had made Saul King over Iſrael*, was to juſtify his *Treaſon* and *Rebellion* againſt his *lawful Sovereign*, choſen by God, or the Prophet lyed, anointed King by himſelf, confirmed by the Conſent of the People, and eſtabliſhed by his own Valour and Virtue.

The Prieſts and Prophets having been of *Samuel*'s Faction, and *Samuel* having made *David* their Head, the Prophet being dead, they gave to *Saul*, enquiring of them about the Event of the War, no Anſwer at all; which affected him too much, becauſe he believed too much; and having been plagued by *Samuel* and *David*, and their Faction, the greater Part of the Time he had been King, he grew melancholy, which is called in the Hiſtory of him, *an Evil Spirit from the Lord*; (excellent Doctrine!) this Melancholy made him credulous, low-ſpirited, and timorous; he ſeeks an Anſwer from a cunning old Woman called a *Witch*; the ſpiteful Anſwer ſhe gave him (becauſe he had ſpoiled her Trade of Fortune-telling, by baniſhing thoſe Pretenders) rendered him ſo dejected and melancholy, that looking upon himſelf as forſaken of God, and deſtined to Death, he loſt all Courage, and haſtened his own End; without which, probably, the *Witch* might have proved a *Lyar*, and his own *dumb Oracles* have been deſpiſed, as they deſerved; but King *Saul* having always a Faction to contend againſt, of thoſe that, in the Eyes of the People, were ſanctified, (of which Party were the Hiſtorians of his Life) and the King dying unfortunately, it was ſaid, *the Lord gave the People a King in his Anger, and took him away in his Diſpleaſure*. Here is a Sample of the Righteouſneſs of *Prieſts* and *Prophets*, who, whenever they wanted Power, were the *Incendiaries* of *Faction* and *Rebellion in every State*, or the *Tools* of *Tyranny*, and *Promoters* of *Slavery*.

David made ſuch Intereſt with the Prieſts and Prophets, by doing all that was in his Power to oblige the *former*, and entering himſelf into the Club of the *latter*, that *he* and *they* publiſhed a Grant, ſealed by the Oath of God, (if his bare Word had been ſufficient, to ſwear had been needleſs) that the Throne of the Kingdom of *Iſrael* ſhould be fixed in the Poſterity of *David* to all Generations, to cut off *Saul*'s Iſſue. The Prophet *David* ſays, *Pſalm* lxxxix. that God *had ſworn to him by his Holineſs, that he would not lye unto David.*

David. One would think God need not *ſwear* that he would not *lye*; but the Prophets often accuſed God of *Lying*, which made this Thing neceſſary; yet in that Pſalm *David* charges God with acting contrary to his *Promiſe* and *Oath*. It may be ſaid, thoſe Things diſcover *David*, at that Time, to be in a Fit of Deſpair; but if the Prophet had Sentiments of God's *Unchangeableneſs*, he would rather, at ſuch Time, have queſtioned, whether that Promiſe really came from God. However, he thought it more political to charge God with Lying, than make that a Queſtion. Accordingly, the better to eſtabliſh this pretended Grant, *David* found out a Way to ſanctify the Murder of the remaining Family of *Saul*, tho' they lived very ſubmiſſively under him. *David*, indeed, ſpared *Mephiboſheth*, a Son of *Jonathan*, becauſe he had ſhewn him Favour before, to pleaſe thoſe People that had a Reſpect for their late King, pretending a Regard to his Oath made to the late Prince his Friend, which being before confeſſed or known, rendered it difficult to get over. But tho' *David* did not put this Cripple to Death, and tho' *Ziba* his Servant's Plot againſt him was too bare-faced not to be detected, yet *David* withdrew his Favours from him, and made him too poor to rebel; his Friends too having no Share in the Government, and his Relations dead. Had *David* dared to truſt to the Lord's pretended Oath, while any of *Saul*'s *Poſterity* was alive, he would never have made ſure Work, to hang them all out of the Way, and treat *Michael*, *Saul*'s *Daughter*, like a Concubine, whom he had forced away from her loving Huſband, to favour his Right of Succeſſion.

It appears by this *Holy* Hiſtory, that the Lord ſeldom or ever made a Perſon King for his Goodneſs, or foreknew how he would turn out. He firſt of all choſe *Saul*, one would think, for his Tallneſs, and he ſoon repented of that; then *David* ſeemed to be choſe for his freſh Colour and Courage; however, the Lord had, by good Luck, now gotten *a Man after his own Heart*, and was ſo fond of him, as to promiſe him upon Oath, he would fix the Crown upon his Seed for ever; and yet only *a ſixth Part* of the Promiſe remained to his *Grandſon*, and ever ſince the Captivity, *all* the Promiſe has been forgot.

Solomon arrived to ſuch a degree of Power, that he kept the Prieſts and Prophets in Subjection, and therefore no Rebellion happened in his Reign, tho' it is plain the Diſpoſition was not wanting; for the Prophet *Ahijah*, in the Name of God, excited *Jeroboam* thereto, who was one of the Malecontents of *Solomon*'s Court; but *Jeroboam* was Politician enough to perceive, that there was no Proſpect of Succeſs in *Solomon*'s Time; therefore he ſecured himſelf in *Egypt* till his Death, and after that, laid hold of the Opportunity that offered, to raiſe himſelf to the Kingdom; which when he had gained, he choſe rather the *Iſraelites* ſhould worſhip *other Gods*, than have *another King*; whereby it is plain he looked on all Prophecy as a Farce, tho' he ſided with that Faction, 'till he obtained his Ends by them. This was he, who tho' ſaid to be choſen of

the God of Iſrael by the Prophet, regarded *that God* leſs than he did *a Calf:* And the Spirit of the Prophet had as little Foreſight of Futurity as a Calf, in chuſing him King; for this was the Occaſion of the Diviſion of the Kingdom, of weakening the People by inteſtine Wars, and of their being, long after, carried into Captivity, if the Prophets may be believed, 1 *Kings* xiv. 16. Did *Jehu* behave any better, who was ſaid to be choſen by the Lord? And if the Lord himſelf was in the Dark, as to Futurity, how ſhould his Prophet ſee? and from whence could come the Light of Prophecy? or how does there appear to be any Light or Truth in it? and if theſe Things were not of the Lord, what then is Prophecy? So that, whether theſe Things are of God, or not, it appears there is no Light nor Truth in Prophecy. What Spirit inſpired the Prophets, may be known by the Actions relating to their Prophecies, as *a Tree is known by its Fruits.*

A Prophet, by the Order of *Eliſha*, anointed *Jehu*, in the Name of the Lord, King over *Iſrael*; the Conſpiracy begun by the Prophets, was finiſhed by the Soldiers; and when *Jehu* had pleaſed the Prophets that contrived to make him King, by murdering not only all the Family of *Ahab*, but *Ahaziah* King of *Judah*, and forty-two of his Domeſtics, and all *Baal*'s Prieſts, he eſtabliſhed the Worſhip of *Jeroboam*, and made *Calves* of them all. Hence it's plain, the Prophets knew no more of Futurity than other Men; ſince by their pretended Inſpiration, they never mended the Matter.

What ſhould we think of a Prophet, who, to ſanctify Treaſon and Rebellion, affirmed, that God had appointed a Perſon to be *King of England*, for the Good of the *Church* of *England*, who as ſoon as he was inveſted with the Power, ſhould eſtabliſh *Popery*, or *Mahometaniſm?* Can we think that God would make that Man his peculiar Choice, that choſe not him? What Man would chuſe or reject, without knowing the Conſequence, and not rather take his Chance as Things fall out, than by making a blind or fooliſh Chance, to have his Judgment arraigned? Would any wiſe King on Earth make that Man his Viceroy, who alienated the Affections of his Subjects to their Sovereign, or ſuffer him to remain in his Office after he had forfeited that, and his Head, by his rebellious Conduct, if it were in the King's power to remove ſuch Viceroy? Certainly, a good and wiſe King would not ſuffer his Subjects to be the Prey of a Tyrant, if he could hinder it.

If what we read of the Prophets be true, *James* v. 17. they did ſometimes, by their miraculous Power, a great deal of Miſchief: By a Prayer of *Elijah*'s, there was no Rain for three Years and ſix Months, ſo that there was a moſt grievous Famine, 1 *Kings* xvii. The ſame Man, when he had tried to convince the Prophets of *Baal* that the God of *Iſrael* was God, without deſiring their Converſion, he ſlew eight hundred and fifty of them, 1 *Kings* xviii. 18, 19, 20, 40. This Prophet alſo deſtroyed twice fifty Men by Fire, that only executed the King's

King's Orders, which they were obliged to do. By virtue of the Prophet *Eliſha*'s Curſe, forty-two little Children were torn to pieces by two She-bears, for only calling him *bald Pate*. 'Tis ſaid, indeed, that his dead Bones raiſed to Life a Man, as they were burying him; and that his Maſter *Elijah* reſtored the *Shunamite*'s Son out of his Fit by Sneezing. It is poſſible to ſuppoſe a Perſon to be dead that is not, and that the *Jews* ſometimes buried Perſons before they were dead, as they bury them the ſame Day they are ſuppoſed to die; and 'tis poſſible for Time to bring a Perſon out of a Fit, that to all Appearance ſeems dead. But if theſe were dead, and reſtored to life; yet, like other bad Quacks, where they cured *one*, they killed an *hundred*. Therefore it appears to me, that the Prophets were as *fallible* and as *faulty* as other Men; and ſince they were *every way as bad* as other Men by *Nature*, there is but little Reaſon to believe they were, in any Reſpect, *ſupernaturally better*.

Jeremiah (iv. 10.) charges God with deceiving both him and the People, ſaying, *Ah! Lord God, ſurely, thou haſt greatly deceived this People and Jeruſalem, ſaying, ye ſhall have Peace, whereas the Sword reached unto the Soul.* At another Time he cries out to God, (xv. 18.) *Wilt thou be altogether to me as a Lyar, and as Waters that fail?* that glide away, and leave the Channel dry. I ſuppoſe he had propheſied ſomething that came not to paſs; therefore to ſave his *own* Credit, he impeached his *Maker*; ſays he, xx. 7. *O Lord thou haſt deceived me, and I was deceived; thou art ſtronger than I, and haſt prevailed*; as much as to ſay, thou art more powerful than juſt; and therefore haſt exerciſed thy Power in deceiving me. It may be ſaid, perhaps, the Prophet was *out of Temper*, but then he was inſpired with *an ill tempered Spirit*. Ezekiel (xiv. 9.) repreſents God ſaying, *if a Prophet be deceived, I the Lord have deceived that Prophet, and I will ſtretch out my Hand upon him, and will deſtroy him*; ſo that the Lord deceives a Prophet, and deceives him on Purpoſe to deſtroy him! One would think this is deſtroying him deceitfully. What *mean* Sentiments does not pretended Inſpiration convey to Man of God Almighty! In ſhort the Prophets tell us, that God repented ſo often (*Jer.* xv. 6.) that at laſt *he was weary of repenting*.

St. *Paul* or ſome other ſuppoſed inſpired Writer tells us, that *God found Fault with the firſt Covenant*, (when he had tried it) and therefore made a new one, and *changed both the Law and the Prieſthood*, (Heb. vii. 12, 18.—viii. 8.) and well he might, if they were *weak and unprofitable*, as the Prophet ſays, (*Ezekiel* xx. 25.) *He gave them Statutes that were not good*: A bad Gift! It ſeems as if God ſo often changed his Mind, that a Man could not depend on God's Word by the Prophets, or his Oath.

Sometimes the Prophets to ſave their Credit ſaid, that God *had put a lying Spirit in their Mouths*, 1 Kings xxii. 23, 24. that is, he made them propheſy Lyes, which he knew would not, or intended ſhould never come to paſs, as in the Caſe of *Chenaanah* and *Micaiah*: Both were equally poſitive and confident, that what each

Man ſaid was true, though differently inſpired; for when *Micaiah*'s Propheſy contradicted *Chenaanah*'s, the latter ſtruck the former on the Cheek, and ſaid, *Which Way went the Spirit of the Lord, from me to ſpeak unto thee?* Therefore they both laid Claim to the ſame Spirit. Nor did *Micaiah* lay the Fault on a *falſe* God, but on his *own* God, that he had commiſſioned a lying Spirit to deceive him and the reſt. Sometimes the Prophets are ſaid to lye in the Name of God, and thereby not only deceive the People, but one another; as in the Caſe of the Prophets at *Bethel*, 1 *Kings* xiii. and *Lying* was ſo common a Practice, that they ſeem to have made a Trade of it. All was ſanctified with the Name of God. And ſince the *true God*'s Prophets propheſied falſe Things, it could not be known who were *true Prophets*, until the Event proved the Prediction, which ſeems to intimate that they propheſied at random, and ſome Things came to paſs by Accident.

Now and then the Inſpiration of their *Cups* paſſed for the Inſpiration of *God*, and ſo they were inſpired with a *wrong Spirit*, when they propheſied *wrong*. *Iſaiah* (xxviii. 7.) ſays, *The Prieſts and the Prophets have erred thro' ſtrong Drink, they are ſwallowed up with Wine, they are out of the Way, thro' ſtrong Drink; they err in Viſion, they ſtumble in Judgment.*

The Prophets to ſave their Credit, often fixed *no Time* to the Events predicted, and then it was eaſy to ſay, the Lord will perform it in his own Time: Or if they fixed a Time, it was put off; and when the Prophecy came not to paſs, the Time for its Accompliſhment was *prolonged*. This was done ſo often, that it became a Proverb among the People, (*Ezek.* xii. 22, 23, 24, 25.) *The Days are prolonged and every Viſion faileth.*

As a bold *Aſſertion* often paſſes for a *Proof*, it is not to be doubted, but a bold and lucky *Gueſs* has often paſſed for a *Prophecy*. And it is certain, that more are *deceived* by *one lucky Prediction* of any Sort, than *undeceived* by *fifty* that are *falſe*. When propheſying was in Faſhion, the Prophets made a Penny of it *, and ſome of them got a good Living by it. The *common Prophets* were ſometimes hackney Proſtitutes, like *common Whores*; they propheſied any Way for Gain, and were hired by Rewards to propheſy as great Men would have them.

It is certain the Prophets *died away* after the Captivity, till they were no more to be found, tho' they *ſwarmed* before. The probable Reaſon is this. They had by *falſe* and *uncertain Prophecies* loſt all their *Reputation*, and ſo the *Faſhion* of being inſpired, when it was no more creditable nor profitable, ſunk; and when neither *Credit* nor *Profit* blew up the Fire of *Enthuſiaſm*, it went out. Some among the *Jews* at length looked upon them not much better than Madmen; (*Jer.* xxix. 26.) *every Man that is mad maketh himſelf a Prophet*, ſaid they. It may be, many of them were like other Enthuſiaſts, they that had no Intention to *deceive others, were themſelves deceived*; and becauſe they *meant well*, and endeavoured to make Men *holy* and *reli-*

* 1 Sam. ix. 7, 8. 2 Kings viii. 8, 9. Nehemiah vi. 12, 13. Micah iii. 11.

religious, they thought themſelves poſſeſſed of the *Holy Spirit*: And indeed I ſee no other Marks of the Holy Ghoſt among them or us.

The Concluſion, or Application.

THE *Jewiſh* Prophets appear to have been the Inſtigators and Promoters of many Factions and Rebellions in *Judea*, and to have cauſed more Calamities than they cured, and for that Reaſon it is likely many of them ſuffered Death. I preſume, they did not expect ſuch Wages for their Work when they took up their Calling. Thoſe that think themſelves *God's Ambaſſadors*, are generally very *proud*, and imperious, which ſometimes brings them to the *Tree* or the *Block*. Whether does it argue more the Wickedneſs of the People that put the Prophets to Death, or the Weakneſs of the Power they ſerved in protecting its Servants no better; which tho' ſaid to be more than human, yet when put to the Teſt, fell under it? Where then is the *Proof* of it? Does it not rather prove, that the very Thing, *viz. a ſupernatural Power*, which they made the moſt Pretenſions to, they were leaſt poſſeſſed of? It ſeems unaccountable, that if a ſupernatural Power *guided* them, it ſhould not *protect* them: Or that a good Maſter ſhould take no more Care of his peculiar Servants! Does an Artificer, when he has done a Piece of Work, burn his Tools?

But if predicting Prophets are any Benefit to a Nation, why have we none? We have *Enthuſiaſts* enough. Is the Age not wicked enough? That is well. Is it too wicked? They are the more wanted. The *twice-born Whitefield*, and his Followers that have large Effuſions of the Spirit, in Conceit at leaſt, know nothing of *Futurity*, nor even the *Truth* of Things *paſt*, which themſelves believe. They fancy they have ſomething within them which makes a *mighty Stir*, but they make a *mighty Stir* about nothing. Has this prophetic Spirit ſo ill defended his Servants formerly, that no Body dares to liſt into his Service now? Now they may propheſy ſafe enough, if they can do any Good, or ſay any Truth that will be ſerviceable to fore-know. I'll venture to affirm, no Prophet of God would ſuffer Death by the Government in KING GEORGE's Days, theſe glorious Days of Learning, Light, and Liberty. Should *Envy* ſay, that in this I abuſe my *Sovereign*, it is only *Envy* can ſay ſo. The Truth is, this is a *knowing Age*; Knowledge is deſtructive of Superſtition, which therefore Prieſts call an *Infidel Age*; and Prophets cannot ſtand the Shrift of theſe Days, fearing unbelieving Eyes ſhould ſee through them. Now they may come with Freedom, they come not at all; for *Freedom* begets *Enquiry*, and produces *Knowledge*. Once there were Laws againſt Crimes that no Perſon ever did, or could commit; and many ſuffered Death in *Old* and *New England*, for doing what could not be done: But now the Law for the Puniſhment of *Witches*, *Vizards*, and *Conjurers*, is annulled, and the *Devil* is defied to do his worſt, he can do nothing at all! There is no Fortune-telling regarded, but by the moſt ſilly deluded People, who want a

wiſe Education, and being young, are unexperienced. No *Prophecies* are uttered, no *Wonders* are wrought in our Days. What extraordinary Artiſt, Mathematician, Lawyer, or Phyſician, makes any vain Pretenſions to a prophetic Spirit, or idly ſpends his golden Time, to ſet forth or interpret Prophecies? The *wiſe* Men of the World are not carried away with the *Gales* of the *Spirit:* It may blow where it liſts for them; for they are not toſſed about *with every Wind of Doctrine*, or Blaſt of Propheſy. Does it ever appear, that the Spirit which makes *Fools* its Favourites, ever makes them *wiſe?* I think that thoſe among us who have pretended, by extraordinary Inſpiration, to be adopted into the *Lord's Privy Council*, are generally Men of more extraordinary *Paſſions* than *Endowments*; and when it happens otherwiſe, their Parts are very ill applied; but thank God, ſince the *French Prophets*, there have been among us no Fools great enough to profeſs foretelling future Events.

Our common Notion is, that propheſying depends not upon the *Faculties* of the Prophets, but on *Divine Inſpiration* only, which moves them to utter Things according to that Impulſe: But the Rabbinical Notions of Prophets are, that it was *ſcientifical*; for there were Schools, where Perſons devoted themſelves to the Study and Attainment of Propheſy. We read of the Schools of the Prophets, and we all know a School is a Place for Inſtruction and Learning. The *Sons of the Prophets* were the *Striplings* in Prophecy, the *Juniors*, the *Scholars*; and propheſying ſignifies not only foretelling future Events, (that is the hardeſt Part) but Singing, Preaching, and Speaking ſomething by a pretended or imaginary Divine Impulſe or Inſpiration, whether it reſpects Time paſt, preſent, or to come. But whatever Spirit the Prophets are conceived to be inſpired by, let it be obſerved, that the Spirit of the Prophets were ſubject to the Prophets, unleſs when they heard Things unutterable, and knew not whether they were in the Body or no; but then they could never utter thoſe Things.

The Truth is, that *extraordinary Inſpiration* is only ſome *extraordinary natural Gift*; and therefore, a Man may as well be an inſpired *Mechanic*, as an inſpired *Divine*, and inſpired Writings are known by their Nature, as Men are; as we read, or ſhould read, 2 *Tim.* iii. 16. *All Scripture that is given by Inſpiration, is profitable for Doctrine, for Correction, for Inſtruction in Righteouſneſs.* What is, and what is not true, is known by *Reaſon*; what is, and what is not good and proper to be done, is known by the *Fitneſs and Nature of Things:* And the Degrees of Good or Evil in Actions is thus known; that which contributes to the Good or Evil of the *greater Number*, and the giving or neglecting ſeaſonable Aid in the *greater Need*, is the *greater Good or Evil.* Neceſſities enhance the Value of Aſſiſtance; and as to the Knowledge of Futurity, or Myſteries, it is happieſt not to deſire any Thing that is out of our Power to attain, as all prophetic Knowledge is.

I ſhall conclude this Subject with

with that incomparable Paſſage from *Row*'s *Lucan*'s *Pharſalia*, which deſcribes *Cato* with his Army, paſſing by the Temple of *Jupiter Ammon*, in *Lybia*. Thus,

Before the Temple's Entrance, at the Gate,
Attending Crouds of eaſtern Pilgrims wait:
Theſe from the horned God expect Relief;
But all gave Way before the Latian *Chief.*
His Hoſt (as Crouds are ſuperſtitious ſtill)
Curious of Fate, of future Good and Ill,
And fond to prove prophetic Ammon's *Skill,*
Intreat their Leader to the God would go,
And from his Oracle Rome's *Fortune know:*
But Labienus *Chief the Thought approv'd,*
And thus the common Suit to Cato *mov'd.*
Chance, and the Fortune of the Way, he ſaid,
Have brought Jove's *ſacred Counſel to our Aid:*
This greateſt of the Gods, this mighty Chief,
In each Diſtreſs ſhall be a ſure Relief;
Shall point the diſtant Dangers from afar,
And teach the future Fortune of the War.
To thee, O Cato, *pious, wiſe, and juſt,*
Their dark Decrees the pious Gods ſhall truſt;
To thee their fore-determined Will ſhall tell:
Their Will has been thy Law, and thou haſt kept it well.
Fate bids thee now the noble Thought improve;
Fate brings thee here to meet and talk with Jove.
Inquire betimes what various Chance ſhall come
To impious Ceſar, *or thy native* Rome;
Try to avert, at leaſt, thy Country's Doom.
Aſk if theſe Arms our Freedom ſhall reſtore?
Or elſe, if Laws and Right ſhall be no more?
Be thy great Breaſt with ſacred Knowledge fraught,
To lead us in the wand'ring Maze of Thought:
Thou that to Virtue ever wert inclin'd,
Learn what it is, how certainly defin'd,
And leave ſome perfect Rule to guide Mankind.
Full of the God that dwelt within his Breaſt,
The Hero thus his ſecret Mind expreſs'd,
And inborn Truths reveal'd; Truths which might well
Become ev'n Oracles themſelves to tell.
Where would thy fond, thy vain Enquiry go?
What myſtic Fate, what Secret wouldſt thou know?
Is it a Doubt if Death ſhould be my Doom,
Rather than live till Kings and Bondage come;
Rather than ſee a Tyrant crown'd at Rome?
Or wouldſt thou know if, what we value here,
Life, be a Trifle, hardly worth our Care?

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What by old Age, and Length of Days we gain,
More than to lengthen out the Senſe of Pain?
Or if this World, with all its Forces join'd,
The univerſal Malice of Mankind,
Can ſhake or hurt the brave and honeſt Mind?
If ſtable Virtue can her Ground maintain,
While Fortune feebly frets and frowns in vain?
If Truth and Juſtice with Uprightneſs dwell,
And Honeſty conſiſts in meaning well?
If Right be independent of Succeſs;
And Conqueſt cannot make it more or leſs?
Are theſe, my Friend, the Secrets thou would'ſt know,
Thoſe Doubts for which to Oracles we go?
'Tis known, 'tis plain, 'tis all already told,
And horned Ammon *can no more unfold.*
From God derived, to God by Nature join'd,
We act the Dictates of his mighty Mind:
And tho' the Prieſts are mute, and Temples ſtill,
God never wants a Voice to ſpeak his Will.
When firſt we from the teeming Womb were brought,
With inborn Precepts then our Souls were fraught,
And then the Maker his new Creatures taught.
Then, when he form'd, and gave us to be Men,
He gave us all our uſeful Knowledge then.
Canſt thou believe, the vaſt eternal Mind
Was e'er to Syrts *and* Lybian *Sands confin'd?*
That he would chuſe this waſte, this barren Ground,
To teach the thin Inhabitants around,
And leave his Truth in Wilds and Deſarts drown'd?
Is there a Place that God would chuſe to love
Beyond this Earth, the Seas, yon Heav'n above,
And virtuous Minds, the nobleſt Throne for Jove?
Why ſeek we farther then? Behold around,
How all thou ſeeſt does with the God abound;
Jove *is alike in all, and always to be found.*
Let thoſe weak Minds, who live in Doubt and Fear,
To juggling Prieſts for Oracles repair,
One certain Hour of Death to each decreed,
My fix'd, my certain Soul from Death has freed,
The Coward and the Brave are doom'd to fall;
And when Jove *told this Truth, he told us all.*
So ſpoke the Hero, and to keep his Word,
Nor Ammon, *nor his Oracle explor'd;*
But left the Croud at Freedom to believe,
And take ſuch Anſwers as the Prieſt ſhould give.

SUPER-

SUPERNATURALS EXAMINED.

DISSERTATION IV.

On *the Defence of the peculiar Inſtitutions and Doctrines of Chriſtianity*, in Anſwer to a late Pamphlet, entitled, *Deiſm fairly ſtated, and fully vindicated from the groſs Imputations and groundleſs Calumnies of modern Believers.* In a LETTER to the Author of the latter Tract.

SIR,

I Have read *that Treatiſe* which, of the many others written againſt your excellent Performance, *alone* deſerves Regard: My love to Truth, and to you its Advocate, excites me to deliver my Sentiments thereon; for that Reaſon, I think neither the *Antagoniſts*, nor the *Subjects*, are unworthy ſpecial Notice. I ſhall endeavour to confine myſelf within the Bounds of *Truth* and *Decency*; and, in order to be brief, ſhall take Notice only of the more material Parts of your Opponent's Arguments. After obſerving to you, that the Controverſialiſts ſhould be diſtinguiſhed by either the Names that themſelves eſpouſe, of CHRISTIANS and DEISTS, or of the Terms CREDULOUS and INCREDULOUS; Characters that are in the directeſt Oppoſition, and, I conceive, may, without Offence, be properly applied; *Believers* and *Infidels* being Terms improper; for, except in *Supernaturals*, both are, in general, Believers or Infidels alike. The *Degrees* between theſe *poſitive Parties* may be accounted *Three*, *viz.* the DOUBTER, the QUERIST, and the EXAMINER. In the latter Claſs I put myſelf. Theſe are the *Terms* or *Appellations* I intend to make uſe of thro' this Work, and therefore thought proper to premiſe this in the firſt Place.

To your Propoſitions, particularly the fifth, *viz.* that NATURAL DUTIES ARE ONLY PERCEIVED BY US TO BE DUTIES, your Antagoniſt Anſwers, that *Faith in God, and Obedience to his Commands, are natural Duties.* By a Duty I underſtand an Act of the Will, ſomewhat enjoined, as a Precept, which we appear able to do, or leave undone, or do the contrary. 'Tis wrong to propoſe Faith to the *Aſſent of the Will*, which ought to be a *Light to the Judgment.* If it is a natural Duty to believe a Propoſition as ſoon as it is propoſed, it makes Examination uſeleſs. What a Man does not ſee a Reaſon for, he cannot believe; unleſs that may be called Belief, which

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is taken upon Truſt *without* Reaſon, and even *contrary* to Reaſon. If this be a *Duty*, then Faith may be called a *Duty*; but Faith, which is founded on Evidence or Reaſon, unavoidably obeys, and a reaſonable Faith cannot obey where Evidence or Reaſon is not; therefore *a true and reaſonable Faith is no Duty at all.* The Duty lies in the *Enquiry*, not in the *Conſequence* of it; for Examination is the Work of the Will, but the Succeſs of it is not: Therefore *Faith* and *Duty* are two Things. It is a Man's Duty to uſe what Means appear proper to him to inform his Judgment, but the Succeſs of the Means is not within the Compaſs of Duty; *and if Faith be no Duty, there is no Righteouſneſs in it.* Though this may ſeem ſtrange to ſome, yet if it be well conſidered, it will clearly appear, that to believe a Propoſition without a reaſonable Proof, is not in the Power of a reaſonable Creature, nor is it in his Power to reject what has ſuch Proof, as ſoon as he diſcerns it; he believes, or diſbelieves, without being retarded by the Conſent of the Will, for when *ſufficient* Conviction appears, it irreſiſtibly conſtrains the Will: Therefore *Faith in God is no more a Duty, than the Ability is to diſcern his Being, or the Properties of it.* As it is not a blind Man's Duty to ſee, ſo it is not a Man's Duty to believe a God, who cannot ſee the Evidences of it: And if Faith in God be not a Duty, Faith in Things of a much lower Degree, that have no Evidence in Nature, can be no natural Duty.

Therefore Obedience to the Commands of God (or what are called ſo) is only due from us to ſuch Precepts as we are convinced are his Commands: For if we muſt obey Commands ſaid to be of God, without ſufficient Conviction, or reaſonable Evidence that they are ſo, our Obedience is blind, and inſtead of being good, may be prejudicial and miſchievous to Mankind. Therefore 'tis evident, *that upon the pretended Ground of Obedience to God's Commands, we are* not *obliged to receive the ſeveral Inſtitutions of a Divine Revelation*, if it don't appear to be *Divine*, nor the *Inſtitutions* to be of God. In ſuch Caſe it cannot be *right* to receive it by thoſe who cannot perceive the *Rectitude* of it, for that is a falſe *Ground*. *And not only* (ſays this Author) *in Matters of Religion, but even in the common Intercourſes of Life, the Relation that ſubſiſts between the Parties concerned in them, often derives and confers an Obligation on particular Injunctions that are not in themſelves natural Duties; but yet are clearly perceived and acknowledged to become Duties, merely becauſe they are commanded.* It had been better if ſaid, merely becauſe the Place, Station, and Circumſtances the Servant is in, ſhew them to be Duties. Obedience of Inferiors to the Commands of their Superiors, in all Things lawful and juſt, appear to be Duties, not becauſe of the *Authority* of the Commander, but of the *Fitneſs of the Things* commanded. The true Obligation of a juſt Command, ariſes from the Authority of that Juſtice which makes it the reaſonable Motive of Obedience. This Gentleman, in an *Exception*, confeſſes as much, when he ſays, "*excepting only when*

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it is something impious, or immoral, something prohibited by a superior Authority." This is ſtill more evident in Things reſpecting the Service of God, for we do not obey God as a *Perſon*, nor have we *vocal* Mandates from him; for, as ſuch, we know neither the one nor the other, but as *the reaſonable Requirements of a Divine Nature*; not for the Benefit of God the Commander, but for our own in obeying; hence we have a Rule to judge by. *All arbitrary Laws pretended to be from God, that do not by Nature tend to Man's Good, are Impoſitions, and not the Commands of God.* Poſitive Inſtitutions, that do not appear to be naturally fit to promote human Happineſs, do not appear to be of God; therefore your Rule holds good, INJUNCTIONS THAT ARE NOT IN THEMSELVES NATURAL DUTIES, CANNOT BE CLEARLY PERCEIVED AND ACKNOWLEDGED TO BECOME DUTIES MEERLY BECAUSE THEY ARE COMMANDED. All that we know of God is, that he is a *Spirit*, that is, a *Divine Nature*, not a *Perſon*; he therefore that loves and obeys Truth, purity of Heart, love to Mankind; that has a benevolent Mind; that regulates his Conduct by Righteouſneſs; loves and obeys God. Thus what is Love and Obedience to God, is eaſily known. *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs* is the Perfection of Nature, and of God's Nature, ſo far as it concerns our Service; therefore, all *Doctrines* and *Precepts* that are incompatible with *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs*, are not of God: And if they do not appear to be wiſe and good, they do not appear to be of him; and ſhould therefore (even though they may be wiſe and good) be rejected till they do ſo appear: For *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs* cannot require us to believe and do what does not appear to us to be wiſe and good; nor to judge *wiſer* than we can, or act by *better* Motives than we have to act by: That would be to require us to do Things impoſſible to be done; for we muſt judge of Things by their *appearance*, unleſs our better Knowledge directs us otherwiſe, and we always judge according to *Knowledge*. 'Tis right to us that we ſhould judge and act in the *beſt* Manner we can, and therefore, when we can know no better than by *Appearance*, that Appearance, tho' *wrong*, is the *beſt* Rule of our Judgment; and we can no more alter this Rule, and the Reſult of it, than we can alter our Frame and Conſtitution. Therefore, if divine Laws appear to us to be *wrong*, and this Appearance be according to the beſt of our Knowledge and Capacities, 'tis *wrong* in us to obey them; becauſe 'tis directly acting againſt Conſcience, againſt the beſt Light and Evidence that we have. 'Tis not *our* Fault that we do not ſee Truth, if we ſeek it, but that of the Circumſtances we are in. Not ſeeing Things in a *true* Light, is often the Occaſion of *wrong* Judgment and Action; yet if we follow the Truth without *ſeeing* it to be ſo, 'tis not following it for the Truth's Sake, and ſo doing deſtroys all Virtue in the Obedience: It is walking in the Dark, not knowing whether we are right or wrong, without any certain Rule to direct us. God cannot appear *juſt* to Man, if his Authority

rity enable him to give ſuch poſitive Laws as have not the Appearance of *Juſtice* and *Fitneſs*; therefore, to impoſe ſuch Laws on Man as the Commands of God, is to repreſent God an *arbitrary* and *unjuſt* Being.

There is a Neceſſity to prove theſe *poſitive Duties* inſiſted on to be God's *poſitive Commands*; *upon this reſts the whole Controverſy*. All poſitive Commands called Duties, not naturally and morally fit, or not appearing to ariſe from the plain Reaſon, and evident Nature and Fitneſs of Things, are Impoſitions; and impoſing them on Men as the Law of God, confounds Mens Underſtandings of God's Law; 'tis *tranſgreſſing* the Commandments of God, inſtead of *obeying* them, and *teaching for Doctrines* and Duties *the Traditions* and Inſtitutions of *Men*.

All reaſonable Duties which are fit and proper, ariſing from the Nature of Things and Circumſtances, are natural, tho' they may be called poſitive; and all poſitive Duties that are not of this Sort, are unnatural and unreaſonable. *We contend for nothing more, than that a juſt Regard ſhould be had to what are the Commands of God*, and not to take for them the Commands of Men: for (as you have ſaid) "whatever are not ori-"ginally in their own Nature "conſtituent Parts of Religion, "can never have a divine Ap-"pointment and Authority to be-"come ſuch;" becauſe the original Nature and Reaſon of Things is always the ſame, God not being changeable and capricious: There is, therefore, good Reaſon to Queſtion ſuch poſitive Commands as are ſaid to be given by the univerſal God, which are not beſt fitted for the univerſal Nature of Mankind. That *the* PECULIAR *Inſtitutions of the Goſpel have a natural Tendency to promote Purity of Heart and Rectitude of Manners*, requires a PECULIAR Proof; if that be done, every ſober *Deiſt* will approve of them; plain Proof of it is all that is wanted.

(P. 14.) After your Antagoniſt has cited you, intimating that "God only requires of Men a "Conduct proportionate to the "Abilities he has given them;" he adds, that *yet, for all this, he may convey certain Inſtructions to our reaſoning Powers and Faculties in the Way of Revelation; and the more limited and confined our Faculties are, in their preſent State, ſo much the more Occaſion may there be for ſuch ſpeciul Aſſiſtance, and more extenſive and perfect Knowledge of our Duty imparted by it.* If our Creator require of us a Conduct but proportionate to our Abilities, thoſe of the moſt limited and confined have no Occaſion for *ſpecial Aſſiſtance* or Knowledge of their Duty more than others, ſince 'tis not fit in the Nature of Things, that all Men ſhould be made equal; and ſince, by this Rule, there will be an equal Diſtribution of Juſtice to all, whether their Abilities are great or little. Beſides, attempting to cure the Imperfections of *Nature* by the Plaiſter of *Revelation*, is beneath the Practice of the all-wiſe *Phyſician*; for whatever Deficiencies are in Nature, they are God's own Work: And beſides this, the daubing with the holy Unction of Revelation, never yet made his Underſtanding *ſtraight*, whom God by Nature made *crooked*; or ever conferred

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thoſe Abilities which Nature denied; but, on the contrary, it has warped many from the *Rectitude of Reaſon*, and, like the Light of Enthuſiaſm, made Men as unwiſe as it found them, if not much more ſo. It is to all Men that depend upon its Light, as above that of natural Reaſon, an inextricable Maze, and a Wilderneſs of endleſs Embarraſſment.

Seeing that natural and poſitive Duties ariſe from one Foundation, viz. *the Relation and Fitneſs of Things*, and appear alike conſpicuous, as ſoon as they do appear, I ſee not the leaſt ſeeming Contradiction (p. 15.) in your ſaying, "Natural Duties only are capable of being perceived by us to be Duties; and that the Reaſon on which a Duty is founded, neceſſarily reſults from the Relation the Perſon to perform it ſtands in to the Perſon to whom it is to be performed." The Duties naturally ariſing from thoſe different Relations, are all *natural Duties*; and none can properly be ſaid to be *ſuperinduced*, that are properly Duties. As God is one, and his Will one, ſo are his Laws.

Therefore (p. 16.) the Gentleman has not proved what he ſays he has, *That the Practice of natural Duties only, is not the* WHOLE *of true Religion, with regard to Practice.* How he will be able to prove, *that the Belief of natural Doctrines are not the* WHOLE *of it in reſpect of Belief*, I ſhall examine. That Doctrines, as Things may have a real Foundation in Nature, *though that Foundation does not appear*, may be true; but 'till *that Foundation does appear*, there is no Reaſon in Nature that we ſhould believe them.

The Gentleman argues, (p. 17.) *That ſince we are obliged to confeſs there may be, and are, many Things in Nature above our Reaſon; to deny the Poſſibility of any Degree of Information, concerning ſuch Matters being imparted to us by divine Revelation, will be found, in the Iſſue, to preſcribe Rules to God, and ſet Bounds to the Exerciſe of his Power, which natural, as well as revealed Religion, clearly teaches us is Infinite.* 'Tis not ſetting any other Bounds to God's Power, than ſuch as the Gentleman has done, p. 11. *All poſſible Power and Authority belong to God.* To ſay, God does not teach us Things above our Reaſon, is only ſaying, he does not give more Light to Man's Nature than it can receive, and it is not poſſible he ſhould.—Whatever is above Man's Underſtanding, is of no Concernment to Man's Happineſs: Such Things, if they are divine, concern only the Divinity, or ſuch Beings whoſe Capacities they ſuit.

Says the Gentleman, *Since we are ſenſible many Things have an actual Exiſtence in Nature, tho' we know not* HOW, or in *what manner*, he concludes, *there can be no Abſurdity in believing, that the ſame Method of conveying Information to us, may be followed in Revelation as in Nature*, &c. But this is a falſe Parallel; we are not ſenſible that any Revelation, ſuperior to Nature, had any Exiſtence at all, as the Works of Nature have; this ought to be proved before that be allowed; therefore like Conſequences will not follow, becauſe the Antecedents

are

are unlike. The Building cannot be the ſame, when the Foundation and Materials are different, and *the Poſſibility of their being on a Level, is not yet ſufficiently eſtabliſhed by any Obſervations* the Gentleman has made. The HOW Things have Exiſtence which we do not know, we do not believe; nor are we ſo much concerned HOW this Revelation ſprouted, tho' we have weighty Objections againſt that, as of WHAT NATURE it is. Certainly, in Things preſcribed us to take, 'tis lawful to enquire whether they be wholeſome, or poiſon.

(P. 18, 19.) To ſay, that what God commands muſt not only *unqueſtionably be true*, but alſo APPEAR to be true, is moſt honourable of God; and is ſo far from *aſcribing to him ſomething in Words, but in Reality nothing at all*, that it is aſcribing nothing but Reality to him. 'Tis moſt fit, that what God reveals to natural Beings, be in a natural Way, or it muſt be *unnatural* to them; and the Gentleman himſelf ſays, *an unnatural Revelation 'tis impious to expect*. Whatever is ſupernatural is not according to Nature, therefore unnatural; for there is no Medium.

The Gentleman hopes to ſhew, *that it is a very proper Ground of our Aſſent, and ſufficient in itſelf alone, whenever it happens, that we ſee* NO OTHER *Reaſon for the Truth of a Propoſition, but that* GOD HAS REVEALED IT. Let him ſhew but this Reaſon, that God has revealed what he calls Revelation, it will be ſufficient in itſelf alone. Let him but do this, this ſingle Point will determine the Controverſy; to prove this by Reaſon is all we require, and will be more convincing than Miracles; therefore we do not call for any Thing unreaſonable or impoſſible, unleſs it be impoſſible to prove this by Reaſon. This is the Subject conteſted. The *Chriſtians* affirm their Book contains a Revelation of God's Will; you *Deiſts* queſtion the Truth of that Affirmation, and require them to prove it: This you think is a reaſonable Requeſt, if they have no mind to deceive you; eſpecially, as you require but a *reaſonable* Conviction, tho' they may give you a *miraculous* one, if they can; but if they can do neither, you judge it unreaſonable and unjuſt to demand your Aſſent, without convincing you that you are wrong, and they are right. You declare yourſelves to be *Lovers of* TRUTH; that let her Banners be diſplayed, and you will be Voluntiers, and fight under thoſe Colours; that you cannot believe without Conviction, nor be convinced without Reaſon; but that, as ſoon as the TRUTH appears to you, you cannot with-hold your Aſſent one Moment; that you will immediately caſt down your Arms, and yourſelves, and venerate that *Goddeſs* wherever ſhe appears. This you profeſs, and this is a fair Declaration; the *wiſer Chriſtians* do the ſame.

To proceed then; I think it proper both Sides ſhould be perfectly well ſatisfied in every Point wherein there may be *Deception*, and till then, *Doubting and Enquiring is your Duty*; and what is put upon Men for *credible and ſufficient Teſtimony*, ought to be ſuch as is *credible to other than Believers*, and ſuch as carries its own *Sufficiency* with

with it. We ſhould take Care of imputing thoſe Things to *God*, which have been the Inventions of *Men*. *God*'s *Word* muſt demonſtrate *God*'s *Wiſdom*; which will be as clear and convincing to Man's Reaſon, by its own intrinſic Plainneſs and Purity, as the Splendor of the Sun is to their bodily Eyes.

In p. 20, 21. we have this Simile. *When an Eaſtern Prince was acquainted by an European of good Quality and Credit, that in theſe Parts of the Earth, the Water would at certain Times become ſolid and unnavigable, without any viſible Cauſe to produce ſo ſurprizing an Alteration in it; was it reaſonable for the Prince to diſbelieve an Account which was well atteſted, merely becauſe it did not appear to him to have its Foundation in Reaſon and Nature?* The giver of this *Simile* argues from hence, that ſince we are ſuch unexperienced and incompetent Judges in *natural* Things, no Wonder we are not able to determine of Things *ſupernatural*; and therefore, that 'tis contrary to Truth and common Senſe to diſbelieve and reject theſe *Supernaturals*. But if *natural* Things puzzle us, why ſhould God confound us with *Supernaturals?* Let us *examine and compare* the *Simile* to the *Application* and *Subject*. The *Eaſtern Prince* could not believe the *European*'s Report, and what then? Was it his Duty to believe what he could not? The *Quality* and *Credit* of the Reporter was all the *Evidence* he had of the *Truth* of the *Report*, and this, as great as it was, was *inſufficient* to convince him. Where did the Fault lay? The Thing reported is true, but not believed by the *Prince*; Why? Was it a *Prejudice* received againſt the *European?* That could not be, if he knew his *Perſon* and *Character*; nor could it be againſt being *informed*; every Body is willing to come at *Knowledge* in an eaſy Manner: Could he believe without *Conviction?* Not unleſs his *Faith* run before his *Reaſon*. Could he refrain Believing, if convinced? Impoſſible! Where then was the Fault? It muſt be either in *the Nature of the Evidence*, or in the *Prince*, for wanting a *rational Conviction*. Now, one of theſe is ſuppoſed to be your Caſe; but the latter depends upon the former. You *don't* believe the Things commanded. Why? becauſe you *cannot*: Why? becauſe you want to be *rationally* convinced of thoſe Things: Why? becauſe the Evidence affords not *ſufficient Proof*. After all then, the Fault is not in you, but in the *Evidence*; make that good, and the Work is done; but you ſay they cannot, therefore you cannot believe; then ſay they, *you muſt be damned*. Why? becauſe you cannot believe Things to you *incredible*, nor do what to you is *impoſſible!* Is this juſt, ſay you? Does this look as as if it came from God the Father of Truth? If this *damnation Doctrine* has nothing *Good* in it, could it proceed from any *good Being? Damnation* on ſuch Terms no Man need fear; but of the *Evil Spirit* that *delivers* it, and of the *ſtupid Nature* that *believes* it, let every one beware. But why is this damning Clauſe? Why, but certainly to frighten poor Souls out of their Senſes; that when their

Senſes are drove away, Faith may be drove in. A little more of this Illuſtration.

An Eaſtern Prince is acquainted by an European of good Quality and Credit. Are we acquainted by Perſons of *good Quality and Credit?* They that acquaint us now with the Story, may be ſo; but they know no more the Truth of it, than we do; therefore I mean the *firſt* Story-tellers, who and what were they? They were, by the Confeſſion of theſe Perſons, of *no Quality*, and of but *little Credit*, even in their own Country; and we can have no other; therefore *the Caſes are not ſimilar.* The Eaſtern Prince might hear that *Water congeals to Ice*, by a thouſand Men more, if he ſought to know the Truth, and all of them *living Witneſſes*; or, if ſo diſpoſed, he might, by a Voyage to a *colder Climate*, *ſee* the Truth of the Story: But our Stories, what Man ever ſaw! Can our Aſſurance of the Truth of what is impoſed upon us, be compared with the Aſſurance this *Prince* may have? There is, certainly, no Compariſon.

The Eaſtern Prince is informed, what? *why*, *that Water freezes*; three Quarters of the World know this to be true, if he don't. But is there one Man in the World who knows the Truth of what we are required to believe *on the Pains of Damnation?* Strange Difference, which *admits of no Compariſon!* Hard Meat! and bad Meaſure! And how does it become ſolid? ſays the *Prince*; *Without any viſible Cauſe*, anſwers the *European*. Whoever, indeed, *ſaw* Cold? this Part of the Simile beſt agrees. 'Tis either an *ignorant* or *deceitful* Anſwer. 'Tis certainly not intended to give Conviction or Satisfaction. He could not ſay, without any *ſenſible Cauſe*; for Froſt is produced by an extreme cold Air. What though he could not *ſufficiently* account for it, he ſhould have accounted for it *as well as he could*; therefore the Cauſe of Unbelief is owing to the *European*, not the *Prince*. In my Judgment, the *latter* is juſtifiable in *not believing*, and the *former* is to be *condemned* for a *Fool* or a *Knave*, in requiring an Aſſent to what he could not, or would not deliver with *ſufficient Evidence* in a *reaſonable* and *proper Manner*. But he that thinks this Prince deſerves to be *condemned* for not believing the Relation of this *European*, would think it very unreaſonable for one to require *his* Aſſent to Things in Nature *as ſurprizing* to him, which were as wretchedly made out; and would imagine, that he is not obliged to believe till he is *better informed*, but thinks it *reaſonable* to diſbelieve an Account that to him *ſeems unnatural:* For what *ſeems* to be *true* or *falſe*, has the *ſame Effect* on us as if it was *really* ſo, unleſs we know it to be otherwiſe. And we can no more prevent this Manner of Judging, than we can the Manner of our own Exiſtence, unleſs we can believe a *Perſon* better than we can our *Senſes*; but then we muſt have *Reaſon* why we do ſo, and as this Reaſon is grounded, it ſhews the Meaſure of our Underſtanding at that Time. Suppoſe this *Prince* could have *no other* Proof of this Fact than this *European*'s *Report*, which being ſo badly told, he could not believe it, tho' true; it argues the

Prince

Prince was no *Fool*, only not willing to be impoſed on; for *Fools* always believe faſt enough, ſo that *Folly and Belief generally go together*. Suppoſe he could not believe the Story told him, it muſt be becauſe he thought it reaſonable to *diſbelieve*; however, *believing* it, might appear reaſonable to another; for we can no more be guided by another Man's Reaſon, 'till we make it our own, than we can ſee what another does, unleſs our Strength of Sight be equal, and we ſee it thro' the ſame Medium. Suppoſe again, he could not believe, tho' the Belief might have been of real Service to him, nor could ſee his Intereſt in Believing, it muſt be owing to ſome *Defect* in the *Circumſtances*; for every one is willing to believe thoſe Things that are *true*, and *advantageous* to him, if he can, and can *ſee* them ſo to be; and if he cannot, it is cruel and barbarous to the utmoſt Degree, to *burn him alive for not being able to believe*. This wicked Part, which makes it a moſt ſhocking Tragedy, is left out of the *Simile*.

Suppoſe a Man that lives between the Tropics, will not, or rather cannot believe, that Water is congealed to Stone near the Polar Circles: What then? What is it to him, whether it be true or falſe? 'Tis Matter of mere Speculation to him, and no more: Is this the Caſe of *the Belief of the Goſpel?* It is not ſo repreſented. There are many Works of Nature we are unacquainted with, which, if known, might ſurprize us; but are we therefore to credit any romantic ſurprizing Story that is told us, which has no Foundation in Nature or Reaſon; becauſe he that reports it, affirms it to be of the utmoſt Importance, when we cannot perceive any Truth in the Story? Of the greater *Conſequence* any Relation is, it ſhould be attended with the greater *Certainty*; with the greater Blindneſs it appears, it has the more evident Demonſtration of Folly or Knavery. Suppoſe it true, tho' a *dark Truth*, every Man cannot ſee Things alike, and at the ſame Diſtance, why ſhould all Men be condemned for want of Sight, or have their Eyes put out, who do not come up to a certain Standard? If ſuch a Law was made, every one muſt ſee the *Injuſtice* of it; and if ſaid to be made by a *good Lawgiver*, every every one muſt know it to be a bold and barbarous *Impoſition* aſcribed to him.

(P. 21.) But we go on with Compariſons, tho' they are far from hitting the Mark, or illuſtrating the Point. *A Man that is born blind, neither has, nor can form any Idea of Light and Colours*; *and yet*, ſays this Author, *the Blindneſs of his Underſtanding will be worſe than that of his Eyes, if he will not believe there is or can be any ſuch Thing in Nature, as Light and Colours, becauſe he can form no Ideas what they are, nor how they are perceived and known.* The Blindneſs of his Underſtanding is worſe than that of a blind Man's Eyes, who does not ſee that the *Want of Belief* is not a Fault of the Will; for a Man can no more prevent believing what appears to him to be true, than he can prevent ſeeing what is before his open Eyes in Day-light. Beſides, 'tis contrary to common Senſe to think we *can believe* what we can

have no *Idea* of. *A blind Man* cannot *believe what Light and Colours are:* What does he believe then about them, when he is ſaid to believe that Light and Colours are? What but the bare Terms, or ſuch Properties of which he can form no Idea, by which other Men can diſtinguiſh he knows not what, nor how. Underſtanding enlightens our Conceptions, but the bare Belief of the Exiſtence of Things we can have no Underſtanding of, can be of no Uſe or Benefit to us; and as it makes us in no Degree *wiſer*, ſo it makes us in no Reſpect *better*.

(P. 21.) *If the want of Experience and Obſervation renders us incompetent Judges of the Nature of Things*, how can we judge of Things ſupernatural? And how can ſuch Things be a Rule to us? And ſince under the Pretence of *ſupernatural Laws*, which we can by no Means judge of; if we yield to the receiving them, what *Impoſitions* and *Impoſtures* may not take Place? What Care then ought we to take, that we are not impoſed on by too eaſy Belief; that we do not aſſent to Things beyond our Underſtanding, as neceſſary to direct our Faith and Practice, which is a ſlaviſh and blind Obedience; for by not waiting to examine and judge what is right, our Judgments become infirm, and cannot diſcriminate Things for want of Exerciſe; and in giving up this *Director*, *Reaſon*, *the Rule of our Obedience*, what *Abſurdities* may not follow? What *Folly* or *Infatuation* may not take Place?

If a good and reaſonable Being can require no other Obedience than according to the Ability and Light he gives us, we ought not to follow we know not what in the Dark; and conſequently, as you ſay, "what we neither have, nor can form any Idea of, after the cloſeſt Application, we muſt and OUGHT to reject, as what does not concern us." 'Tis unreaſonable to require us to receive that for *Truth*, which does *not appear at all, or not appear to be Truth*; and 'tis wicked to pretend there is *Righteouſneſs* in doing what is unreaſonable. As a blind Man has nothing to do with *Lights* and *Colours*, which he can determine nothing about; ſo we have nothing to do with what we cannot know to be Truth, though it be Truth. As what does not come within the verge of Man's Knowledge, is not the Subject of it; ſo Principles above human Comprehenſion, are not Principles fit for human Faith: And becauſe they naturally lead the Mind into a Maze of Confuſion and Error, therefore they OUGHT to be rejected; and with ſuitable Marks of Reſentment and Indignation, when preſſed upon Men with Penalties and Zeal.

Whatever God reveals as Truth, muſt neceſſarily *appear* to be Truth, becauſe revealed. All *Doctrines*, and *Precepts*, therefore, coming from God, which are neceſſary for Man to *believe* and *practiſe*, muſt ſo *appear*; they muſt have the *Signatures* and *Characteriſtics* of *Divine Wiſdom:* For *Light* and *Truth* bring their own Demonſtration with them. If God command Man what he is to *believe* and *do*, without diſcovering the *Reaſons* for his Obedience, he does not act as a *wiſe and good Being*, nor with Man as a *reaſonable*

able Creature. *Goodneſs* and *Wiſdom* delight to diſcover themſelves what they are; for as they cannot appear *better*, they will not appear to be what they are not. If *Reaſon* in Man be not an Evidence of *Wiſdom* in God, and if what he requires as our *reaſonable Service*, be not correſpondent to *Goodneſs* in him; we have no Evidence that God is *wiſe* or *good*, and conſequently no Reaſon to believe he requires any Obedience of us.

The Doctrines, which are called the Revelation of God, *that do not appear to have their Foundation in Reaſon and Nature* (both which have God for their Foundation) *do not appear to be of God.* If he be a God of *Underſtanding*, he will not require Men to ſerve him without *their Underſtandings*; but ſo they muſt do, if they believe and act without knowing *why* or *wherefore*: Therefore if God reveals to Man his *Duty*, he reveals to him the *apparent Reaſons* of his Duty, which are the *proper Motives* to it, or God delights in Man's *ignorant and ſtupid Obedience*; and no wonder then he is ſo *ignorantly and ſtupidly obeyed.* And then, though *Revelation* ſays, *Light is come into the World*, yet it is ſuch as puts out all *human Light*, and involves Men in *Darkneſs.* As God cannot ſpeak, but it muſt be *true*; ſo the Truth of his Word muſt *appear* to them to whom he reveals it, or the *Truth* muſt be *doubtful*; and conſequently it muſt be *doubtful*, whether it be *his Word* or no. And as that cannot be of the Light, which is not diſcoverable by it; ſo that cannot be the *Revelation of Wiſdom and Goodneſs*, in which the *apparent Marks of Wiſdom and Goodneſs are not revealed.*

Your Antagoniſt ſeems to triumph in your giving the rational *Chriſtian's* Scheme, without being particular in your Anſwer to it; to ſhew what Cauſe he has of Triumph, I therefore attempt it.

The SCHEME.

They argue, that as the Religion of Nature, abſolulely conſidered, and in its full Extent, is only known to God, if he ſhould be pleaſed to make a ſupernatural Revelation of ſuch Parts of that Law to us, which our unaſſiſted Reaſon could never have diſcovered, ſuch a Revelation ought to be gratefully received, and readily acknowleged. For tho' no Doctrine that has not its Foundation in Reaſon and Nature, can be a religious Doctrine; yet Doctrines that have ſuch a Foundation, though that does not appear, may, if God pleaſes, be communicated to us, either by himſelf immediately, or mediately by his Agents, without any Reſtriction on, or

The ANSWER.

This Argument is founded on a wrong Hypotheſis; for as the Religion of Nature ariſes from the natural Relation and Circumſtances of Things, *they only* diſcover the neceſſary Duties thoſe Relations and Circumſtances require, which ſets aſide all *ſupernatural Revelation*, and the Need of it. Therefore there can be no Revelation from God, of Doctrines and Duties for Man's Belief and Obedience, but ſuch as not only have, but *appear* to have their Foundation in Reaſon and Nature: For if we are to receive Things, not as what they appear to be to us, but as what they are in themſelves,

or Repugnancy to any of his Attributes. And this, ſay they, is the Caſe of all ſupernatural Doctrines contained in the Scriptures which collectively compoſe the Chriſtian Faith; theſe are ſo many Revelations of the Law of Nature, which unaſſiſted Reaſon could not diſcover; and though they remain incomprehenſible, and lie out of the Reach of Reaſon, yet when that which is imperfect is done away, and Faith is turned into Viſion, they will then appear to us to be founded in Truth and Reaſon.

Let the *Gentleman* now behold this *rational Chriſtian Scheme*, and ſee how formidable it is, how *deſtructive of all your Objections*; how eaſy is this *ſtubborn Subject reduced!* and by what plain Arguments is it anſwered and refuted? Thus it is reducible to your Queſtion, "Whether thoſe Doctrines that "cannot be perceived to have "their Foundation in the Reaſon "and Nature of Things, are, "notwithſtanding, certainly thus "founded;" and I think it evidently appears from what has been ſaid, they are not: "Whe-"ther therefore they are to be "ſo allowed, only becauſe they "are contained in the Scrip-"tures," will ſcarce be made a Queſtion by any reaſonable Queriſt. Therefore, *the Reaſonableneſs and apparent Truth of every Doctrine reſpectively, is neceſſary to prove it right, or whether it be divinely inſpired.*

(P. 25.) If *Chriſtians* do not agree about what Revelation reveals, 'tis evident they are in the *dark*, and it is no Wonder, *if* then God requires of us a Conduct above the Abilities he has furniſhed us with, which is repugnant to all thoſe moral Attributes we aſcribe to Deity. And as the Foundation of ſuch Religion does not appear to be in God, in Nature, or in Reaſon; therefore 'tis *unnatural* and *irrational*, without any Appearance of a Foundation at all; therefore, wherever it is contained, or whatever it is called, it is contrary to *Truth* and *Virtue*; and when that comes to paſs, which will not, then Things will appear to be true, which *are* not.

Darkneſs cauſes Doubts. If the *Nature* of this Revelation does not *clearly appear*, it does not clearly appear whether it be from God, or is any Revelation at all; and if *Believers* themſelves are not agreed about the Senſe of it, how ſhould *Unbelievers* be convinced by them?

(P. 28.) The Queſtion, at length, agreed to is, *Whether all the Doctrines in Scripture are divinely revealed?* Not *whether they are apparently reaſonable?* And though we muſt not take *the uncontrollable Liberty of ſubſtituting one Queſtion in the room of the other*, yet I will venture to ſay, and undertake to prove too, that if they are not the one, they are not the other: For whatever is not reaſonable, is unreaſonable; and whatever is unreaſonable, cannot be divinely revealed.

(P. 29.) He argues againſt *ſupernatural Matters* being incapable of Examination by natural Reaſon thus. *What can be more ſupernatural, more above the Comprehenſion of Reaſon, than the* Manner

ner *of God's Exiſtence*; *yet you will not infer, that becauſe this is a ſupernatural Matter, therefore the* Exiſtence *of ſuch a Being is incapable of being apparently reaſonable*, &c. but the *Manner* of God's Exiſtence, and the *Exiſtence* of ſuch a Being, are two diſtinct Things. Granting the *Manner* of God's Exiſtence to be a ſupernatural Subject to Man, as being above the Comprehenſion of his Reaſon, therefore the *Manner* is incapable of Examination by us, becauſe incomprehenſible; but that *God does exiſt*, we judge to be not above human Reaſon to apprehend and examine, therefore *not a ſupernatural Matter*; the other which is, we can neither examine nor believe.

This Gentleman is not willing to grant, that *natural* and *ſupernatural* are contradictory Terms, therefore gives this Definition. *Whatever we call ſupernatural is as much comprehended within the immenſe Syſtem of Nature, and has its Foundation there, as thoſe very Objects that are the moſt familiar to us, and eſteemed moſt natural and common.* Then Nature comprehends all Things, and there is nothing ſupernatural. So all Miracles and Prophecies, but ſuch as are within the Circle of Nature, are diſbanded: And I believe, in this one Explanation, that *Revelation*, which is the Matter conteſted, is explained away; for this Definition will not comprehend the *ſupernatural Works of Wonder, and wonderful Doctrines*, delivered in the Scriptures; and is an Evaſion, only for the Sake of a Retreat to more ſecure Defence: But *Nature* teaches nothing above *Senſe* and *Reaſon*, and *Reaſon* knows nothing beyond *Nature*; but *Supernaturals* are ſet up to confound both.

Now to the former Queſtion, which is the Point of Debate; *Whether the Scriptures are divinely revealed?* (P. 38.) Our Author ſays, *The Steps that are proper to be taken on this Occaſion are, to ſhew that the Scriptures were written by Perſons divinely inſpired*; *—the ſeveral Writers inſerted no Doctrines as grounded on Divine Authority, but ſuch as were really ſo*; *—the original Scriptures have been faithfully tranſmitted down to us.*

Firſt then, *the Scriptures were written by Perſons divinely inſpired.*

One Argument is, *that the* Old-*Teſtament-Writers were inſpired, if the* New *were, becauſe ratified by them.* There are many now that believe the Scriptures were inſpired, and yet don't underſtand them, nor can agree about them, theſe then are not inſpired with proper Underſtanding; ſo by the Application of Prophecies from the Old-Teſtament-Writers, by the New, it is plain *they underſtood them not*, and therefore were not inſpired: The Proof of which is ſhewn by Mr. *Collin's Scheme of literal Prophecy*, and Mr. *Parviſh's Enquiry into the Jewiſh and Chriſtian Revelation.*

An Argument that the New-Teſtament-Writers were divinely inſpired is, that "*they performed what all the Wiſdom and Improvements of natural Reaſon, and the moſt inquiſitive Philoſophers were not able to perform:* What? *They inſerted in their Writings a compleat Syſtem of Morality, and all the Principles and Duties of natural Religion.* This is aſſerted, but how

is it proved? *All our Prophets*, indeed, *propheſy ſo*; but it ſeems to me, that God has put a *lying Spirit in the Mouth of all theſe our Prophets*. What Philoſophers ever wrote upon Morals, that have not given as compleat a Syſtem? And why are *Scraps* of Morality, ſcattered here and there, called a *Syſtem?* And why a *compleat Syſtem*, when the *eſſential* Part of a *moral Syſtem* is wanting, *viz.* Rules for the well governing a Nation; and when the *Morals* want *mending* by Explanation, to give ſome a more *looſe*, others a more *reſtrained* Senſe? And when there are thoſe that *no Art can mend*, and therefore are *explained away?* Theſe Things are ſo eaſily proved, that they are too well known to need it: However, ſee ſome of them below *.

Another Proof given of the Inſpiration of theſe Writers, is, that *they recovered and reſtored the true Light of Reaſon, at a Time when the wiſeſt Men acknowledged it did no where appear*. I wiſh the Gentleman had informed us who thoſe *wiſe Men* were; ſure, they were not thoſe that came out of the *Eaſt* to worſhip the Infant JESUS, the new-born God; for they, as far as I can examine, never had Exiſtence, but in MATTHEW's *Goſpel*. I want to be informed, how the true Light of Reaſon diſappeared? And how it has appeared ſince; and how by *their* Means? Were not Men *the ſame rational Beings* then, as now? Has the World been *wiſer* ſince the inſpired Age? Or were the Inſpired themſelves made *wiſer* by their Inſpiration? Have Mankind, by their Means, thought or acted *more rationally?* Does the general Nature of Things change? If not, how came the human Nature to ſuffer ſuch an Alteration? Was Mankind *ignorant* then, and is he not ſo now, and has been ſo ever ſince? Is he any *better* or *wiſer* than before? Not a Jot. What wonderful Reſtoration have they then made of the *Light of Reaſon?* Hath the *Chriſtian* Part of the World been wiſer or better than the reſt? Rather worſe. Have they not committed all Manner of the moſt ſavage and inhuman Wickedneſs *for Chriſt's Sake?* How then have they *enlightened* and *mended* the World? And how does the Fruits of their Inſpiration appear? That all human Kind loſt the true Light of Reaſon, is romantic; and if ever it was the Caſe, one would be tempted, as you ſay, to think it *unavoidable*, and therefore *innocent*.

A third Argument given to prove theſe Writers inſpired, is, *they delivered Rules and Inſtructions for the proper manner of worſhipping God*; *a Point which* Socrates *diſſuaded* Alcibiades *from attempting*,——*and likewiſe acknowledged to his Pupil, that this Matter was not diſcoverable by human Reaſon alone, tho' it was ſuch an important Subject, ſo neceſſary to be known, that he foreſaw the ſupreme Being would ſend an eſpecial Meſſenger on Purpoſe to inſtruct Men in it*. 'Tis poſſible *Socrates* might ſay ſo, for aught I know of the Man, but 'tis more likely ſome *Chri-*

* Matth. v. 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 38, 39, 40, 42, 44, 48. Ibid. vi. 14, 15, 19, 25, 26, *&c.* Ib. vii. 1, 6, 7, 8. Ib. viii. 22. Ib. x. 37, 38. Ib. xvi. 24. Ib. xviii. 22. Ib. xix. 21. Ib. xxiii. 9. 10.

Chriſtian has made him ſay what he never ſaid. But why did *Socrates* diſſuade *Alcibiades* from delivering Rules and Inſtructions for the proper Manner of worſhipping God? Why, becauſe 'tis what the World are not likely ever to agree about; and what this boaſted *Revelation* itſelf is unable to make even *Believers* do. The moſt ſincere Followers of the *Charta Sacra*, have never agreed about what it teaches; ſo that notwithſtanding this *enlightening Revelation*, they are all in the Dark, not a Soul can ſee by it to demonſtrate its wondrous ſupernatural Light to another. And ſome think, 'tis highly neceſſary a *new Revelation* ſhould be given to explain the *Old*; for though we give *hundreds and thouſands* a Year to have it explained, that the whole World is not able to do it, that it might paſs for *heavenly Light*, if there was no *human Reaſon* in the World; but that the latter puts the former out, and diſcovers its palpable Darkneſs. Alas! for the pitiful Inhabitants of that Part of the World who have miſerably felt its Effects, as a *Fire without Light*, who have not been *warmed*, but *burnt* with it; not enlightened by the *Wiſdom* of its *Doctrines*, but confounded and dazzled with the *Myſteries* of its *Godlineſs!* Ah! that the Fact was falſe which you have ſaid, that "Millions of People "have fallen a Sacrifice to *Chri*-"*ſtian* Piety." Happy had it been for every *Chriſtian* Nation, if this was a *groſs Imputation of groundleſs Calumny*, as your Opponent calls it; but 'tis as *certain* a Truth, as 'tis a *melancholy* one. By this may be ſeen, of what *excellent Service* to Mankind their Rules and Inſtructions for worſhipping God have been; and in what *proper Manner* they have been given, or brought down to us, underſtood, and practiſed all the Way. Certainly the Tree is known by its Fruits. It may be thought *partial* in me, as an *Examiner*, to ſay theſe Things; but they are the Fruits of my Examination.

Yet the Gentleman, exulting, ſays, as if he had proved his Points, when he has but named them, (p. 40.) *Had not the Deity immediately dictated to, and impreſſed upon the Mind of each Writer, the Matters ſpecified above*, (or before) *by what natural Cauſes could it have happened, that this Collection of Writings* (*the New Teſtament*) *ſhould be ſo vaſtly different from all others, and ſo greatly exceed them, as to comprehend in it a Republication of the true original Religion of Reaſon and Nature, exactly diſtinguiſhed and ſeparated from all the Corruptions which Polytheiſm, Idolatry, and Superſtition, had introduced and mingled with it; and bring to Light primæval Truths, that had been hid from Ages and Generations.* And yet the DEISTS, the only People in the World that adhere *to the true original Religion of Reaſon and Nature*, and are ſeparated from all the Corruptions here mentioned, cannot find in it theſe *primæval Truths* boaſted of, therefore *this Boaſting is not good*, becauſe it is the mere Compliment of his humble Devotion paid to his dear Paper Idol.

Come on, *my Friend*, let us follow our Leader, to ſee if he follows Truth; his *genteel Addreſs* makes even Error look like it,

it, as well as the *ſeeming Reaſon* with which he clothes his Arguments, which, without all doubt, appear cogent to the *Believer*; for they ſhew the *great Abilities* of the Man, in that he maintains a very bad Poſition, with very great Art. He has indeed the labouring Oar, who maintains Error againſt Truth, *hic labor hoc opus eſt*, whereas Reaſon and Nature render the Work eaſy, and the Steps that trace them are pleaſant.

We are now to take for granted the *moral Characters* of *unknown Perſons*, and upon this Foundation we are to allow that *they inſerted no Doctrines as grounded on Divine Authority, but ſuch as were really ſo; and to ſuppoſe otherwiſe, is an ungenerous, unjuſt Suſpicion.* This is, I muſt own, a moſt complaiſant Method of gaining a Point, and complimenting away a Man's Underſtanding. It diſplays extremely much the *Gentleman*, but not the *Philoſopher*. Or, indeed, it looks like attempting to get that by *Begging*, which cannot be got by *Labour*. Let the *Wiſdom* and *Truth* of the *Doctrines* ſpeak for themſelves, let their *Nature* and *Tendency* ſhew the *Spirit* that inſpired them; nothing elſe can do it: To attempt any other Proof, is doing nothing to the Purpoſe.

A further Argument, and as fruitleſs as the former, your Opponent advances, is, that *the Conſiſtency of all the Goſpel Doctrines is a weighty Argument, that the ſeveral Writers have not confounded their own private Conceptions with the Doctrines they received by Divine Inſpiration.* Was there any Weight in this Argument, it might be eaſily proved againſt them, that neither the *Hiſtory* nor *Doctrines* are conſiſtent. I own that the *evangelical Phyſicians* with us have a Way of *Plaiſtering* up old Sores, but they cannot *heal* them. *Stories* may be related, and *Doctrines* delivered ſo as to be very conſiſtent, without any Truth in either; nay, though the one may appear to be *highly probable*, and the other *ſeemingly reaſonable*, yet this is no Proof of the *Veracity* of either; but if *Inconſiſtencies* plainly appear, 'tis a weighty Argument againſt their being of Divine Authority.

The laſt remaining Circumſtance he aſſerts, is, that *the original Scriptures have been faithfully tranſmitted down to us.* That is more than any Man alive can be ſure of. How is this poſſible to be proved, when the original Copies, and writers are unknown. 'Tis not certainly known *where, when, by whom*, and *in what Language*, they were firſt written. All the Accounts we have of them is, by the moſt *uncertain Traditions* of a Church, notorious in every Age for *Lies* and *Forgery*, and through the Hands of Sects and Factions, that have ever, from the firſt Age of the Church, condemned each other for *Interpolations*, and forging evangelical Hiſtories, apoſtolic Acts, Epiſtles, and Revelations, which were not ſeparated till much later Ages; and all that has been received for *canonical*, has not been ſo made, till Time had worn out the Objections againſt them, and Power had deſtroyed thoſe Objections. There is not remaining any one Book in the New Teſtament, but ſome *Chriſtian Sect* has condemned. The uppermoſt Sect was always

always *Orthodox*, and have deſtroyed both *Books* and *Men*, that have been againſt them, when they have had them in their Power. It was *Authority*, and the *prevailing Opinion*, more than *Reaſon* or *Divine Inſpiration*, were the Rules of determining what they ſince call the *True* from the *Spurious*. That the original Scriptures have not been faithfully tranſmitted down to us, I have elſewhere ſhewn. 'Twas more than a Century before the Goſpels were made public; therefore 'tis a Queſtion if they had any apoſtolic Original: And ſince 'tis confeſſed by Believers themſelves, from the earlieſt Ages, that there have been Corruptions in the Text itſelf; and even with us, there are perpetually Objections to the Tranſlations of it, that 'tis otherwiſe in the Original, and that the Originals (ſo called) have various Readings. The *Chriſtians* reading in their Churches the Goſpels and Epiſtles that *we* have, is no Proof of their being genuine; they alſo read thoſe that are counted *ſpurious*, as well as thoſe that Time and Authority have called genuine. When theſe Things, and a thouſand more like theſe, have been inſinuated and anſwered a thouſand Times over, *nothing can prove Divine Inſpiration better than its own Divine Nature, and intrinſic Worth.*

This Gentleman tells us, (p. 44.) that *Tertullian ſeems to aſſert, that ſeveral Originals were remaining in his Time, which was in the third Century.* I make no doubt of it, but doubt much if they had one Century of Exiſtence before his Time.

Again, *The Senſe of the Goſpel has oftentimes been ſadly perverted, but the Text has been tranſmitted pure and untainted to this Day*; then it was impure and tainted in the Original, as appears by the *Inconſiſtencies* and *unintelligible Matters* therein contained. Indeed, a *Deiſt* will ſay, he thought as much, that what Alterations it has received, has been made to mend it; but that 'tis as much above human Learning to do, as its Birth was below its Production. But how has the Goſpel Text been tranſmitted pure and untainted to the People, when ſome *Papiſts* and *Proteſtants* accuſe each other of a corrupt Tranſlation?

(P. 45.) Our *Chriſtian* Advocate inſinuates, *that St.* Matthew, *and the other* Evangeliſts, *were equally qualified, and equally diſpoſed to give a punctual Account of the Religion of* JESUS CHRIST, *as* Plato *and* Xenophon *were to give a true Repreſentation of the Religion of their Maſter* Socrates. Then the Evangeliſts were as *learned* and *wiſe* as *Plato* and *Xenophon*, or *Plato* and *Xenophon* were as *unlearned* and *ignorant* as they. The contrary we have been all along taught; but it ſeems we are taught any Thing that will eſtabliſh the Credit of thoſe that muſt be eſtabliſhed, as it beſt ſuits the Argument and the Times; one Thing To-day, and another To-morrow.

He goes on; *that the Subſtance of all Chriſtian Doctrines and Duties originally contained in the New Teſtament, our preſent Copies correſpond as exactly with their Originals, as thoſe of the* Grecian *Writers above-mentioned do with theirs.* What in Reaſon then can be expected

pected better than it is? If the *Original* be *plain* and *pure*, what need has it of *Explanations?* For can *Man's Learning* mend *God's Wiſdom?* If it be not, that which is *originally* and *naturally bad*, no *Explanations* can make *good*, without changing its *original Nature*; which is deſtroying the *Original* by altering it. If it be divinely pure, or not, the World of *learned Gentlemen*, that take ſuch infinite Study to explain it, at ſuch an immenſe Charge, may ſave themſelves the Pains, and other good People the Coſt; for if it be, we need them not; and if it be not, let them leave us to the Guidance of Dame Nature, and the Government of good Laws.

Now it ſeems we are come to a Period in this Matter, becauſe what follows is a new Subject, which concerns only the peculiar Doctrines of *Chriſtianity*; one of which has been already conſidered, *viz.* THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS, which though you ſay affects but a PART, your *Chriſtian* Adverſary is of another Opinion; His Words to you are theſe; *What Part, I pray, what ſingle Doctrine of* Chriſtianity *does the Trial of the Witneſſes affect? Nothing leſs than the Reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt; a Doctrine which, by the plaineſt and moſt notorious Conſequence, affects the* WHOLE CAUSE; *a Doctrine with which the Truth of all Chriſtianity is ſo inſeparably connected, that they muſt confeſſedly ſtand or fall together*; therefore, I think I may be excuſed from meddling with any other Parts at this Time, till that is ACTUALLY anſwered; which I believe will not be, 'till he comes again in Glory; and then all our Objections will be perfectly anſwered; our human Reaſon be eternally baffled, and hide itſelf in everlaſting Confuſion. But we are adviſed *to judge nothing before the Time*, or before that Time come; but, in the mean Time, let us proceed to examine, in order to ſift out Truth from Error, in every Thing neceſſary, that falls in our Way.

I am,

and deſire always to remain,

a faithful Friend and Servant

to You and Truth.

POST-

POSTSCRIPT.

I Have met with a *little Author*, written in Favour of the *Great Obſervator* on St. *Paul*, who ſays, *Deiſts do not examine*; but he expreſſes himſelf according to his *little Wit*, for it is Examination and Reaſon that makes Men ſincerely *Deiſts* or *Moral Philoſophers*. For my own Part, I can ſafely ſay, that if I had never *ſeriouſly thought*, and *ſtrictly examined*, I had not been a *Diſbeliever*. Men never render themſelves more contemptible, than when they aſſert groſs Falſhoods. I think, he that has an honeſt Heart has the Root of the Matter in him. Let Men ſay what they will, and wrangle about Religion as they pleaſe, which they moſt ſhamefully do, who would haveMen believe thoſe Things to be true that has not the Appearance of Truth, nor can be ſo made to appear to an honeſt Heart and a diſcerning Eye, by all the Art of Man, the Art of evermore *new tranſlating* and *new transforming* Scripture by different Words and Explications; which are only ſo many Shifts and Evaſions, to avoid the Light that diſcovers their Darkneſs: And ſince every one hath their different Expoſitions, and always find new ones, when newly preſſed with the evident and apparent Senſe. The ſame manner of dealing will vindicate as well the *Alcoran*, or any Book in the World, as the Bible: And that Scripture, or Book, which wants ſuch Methods of Vindication, ſhews it wants mending, is defective and erroneous.

I have now ſaid all that I deſire to ſay on theſe Subjects, which will be Teſtimonies to After-times, of the *extenſive, glorious, and happy Freedom* theſe Times enjoy, to the *eternal Honour* of that GOVERNMENT which gives it, and of his preſent MAJESTY, who is the *Protector* of all our civil and religious Rights and Liberties, never ſufficiently to be valued by a grateful Heart, and a thankful Receiver; for nothing can render a People more paſſionately *fond of their Country*, nor more *dutiful to their Prince and Governors*, than the happy Enjoyment of *reaſonable Liberty*, of all Things the moſt deſirable, and the moſt valuable to all thoſe that can taſte and enjoy the Bleſſings and Benefits of it.

SOCIAL

(4)

SOCIAL BLISS

CONSIDERED:

In MARRIAGE and DIVORCE; COHABITING UNMARRIED, and PUBLIC WHORING.

CONTAINING,

Things neceſſary to be known by all that ſeek mutual Felicity, and are ripe for the Enjoyment of it.

WITH

The SPEECH of Miſs POLLY BAKER; and Notes thereon.

——————Man when created,
At firſt alone, long wandered up and down,
Forlorn and ſilent as his Vaſſal Beaſt;
But when a Heav'n-born Maid to him appear'd,
Strange Paſſion fill'd his Eyes, and fir'd his Heart,
Unloos'd his Tongue, and his firſt Talk was Love. OTWAY.

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M DCC XLIX.

SOCIAL BLISS

CONSIDERED.

THE

PREFACE.

THOSE that are worthy to know, and enjoy the Rights of human Nature, and the righteous Liberties of Mankind, will make a right Uſe of them: To thoſe it is given to underſtand and believe Truths hid from them, whom Reaſon cannot ſet free from the Fetters of a falſe Faith.

There are Men of ſuch unnatural gloomy Sects, who believe, that God and Nature take different Sides, that Piety conſiſts in the Mortification of natural Appetites in Practice, and the Dictates of Reaſon in Matters of Belief, that maintain an everlaſting War with themſelves and Rebellion againſt Nature, *to mortify the Fleſh with its Affections and Luſts*; hence reaſonable Pleaſure is condemned and prohibited; though God has given theſe natural Affections and Luſts to be gratified with Reaſon, to make Life ſweet and agreeable, that Man may be better able to bear the Bitter and Sour that is in it, to keep his Mind chearful from Gloomineſs and Deſpondency, and render his Diſpoſition chearful and eaſy. For the Sake of Reſt, Man endures Labour; and for the Pleaſures of Love, the Fatigue and Diſquietudes of bringing up a Family. Since we are thrown into Life, and muſt accept of it ſo long as we are in it, *for better for worſe*; let us enjoy the *better*, as well as the *worſe*, as much as our Nature and Circumſtances with Reaſon will permit, or elſe the *Yoke* of Life will not be very *eaſy*, *nor the Burden light*. If we have not a moderate Share of the Good, as well as of the Evil in Life, 'tis not worth our having.

If God is offended with Things that do, or do not offend Man, and cannot affect him, he muſt be the moſt unhappy of all Beings. We can therefore be only *ſaid* to offend God, when we break his Laws; and Laws contrary to our Nature, our Reaſon and Fitneſs of Things for our Benefit and Satisfaction in general, are not thoſe Laws that he has given us for our Conduct?

Yet ſuch a moody Generation have many of the Religious been, as to imagine, they pleaſe God moſt, when they moſt diſpleaſed themſelves; but they that deny themſelves all the innocent Gratifications of Senſe, what are they the better? Do they oblige or benefit God, or Man, or themſelves, by their wayward Actions?

Religion has been made to conſiſt in a denial of thoſe Things moſt, that pleaſe the moſt, to make it *ſupernatural*; otherwiſe it is meer natural Religion, but if we were ſupernatural Beings, it might be good Reaſoning. Notwithſtanding all theſe mighty Pretenſions, the Nature and Proneneſs of Men and Women to embrace each other, is ſo fitted and diſpoſed as God will have it, and gratifying the Appetites and Deſires they have in common, tends to their common Good; and notwithſtanding what all Men can ſay, or do, Nature is invincible and will be obeyed. It is the Judge or Meaſure *in* Man, of what is Good and Evil *to* Man.

Love and Society, which are the greateſt Felicities in human Life, unnatural Religion endeavours to deſtroy, by forbidding the mutual Harmony of the different Sex, and cloiſtering them up ſeparate from Society and the World; ſo that Society and the World receive no Benefit from their Being which they can withhold; whereby *this* World is but little in their Debt, and 'twill be well for them if the *next* World be more in their Debt.

What is more natural to young People than to deſire to be married, and what can be more commendable and for the good of Man, when it happens well? What worſe when it happens ill? Why then ought not Marriage to be encouraged, and Divorce allowed? Yet Marriage is only permitted by St. *Paul* to prevent Fornication; or rather he permits married Perſons to enjoy one another for that Reaſon. 1 *Cor.* vii. 1, 2. *It is good for a Man not to touch a Woman; nevertheleſs, to avoid Fornication, let every Man have his own Wife, and every Woman have her own Huſband.* And verſe 5. *Defraud not one another, except it be with Conſent for a Time, that you may give yourſelves to Faſting and to Prayer, and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your Incontinency.* Were it not for Satan's Temptations, the Defrauding one another would be no Fraud: 'Tis the Fear of him that makes Saints honeſt. That he recommends Celibacy rather than Matrimony, I think, cannot be denied, *Ver.* 7, 8, 9. *I would that all Men were even as I myſelf; but every one hath his proper Gift of God, one after this Manner and another after that. I ſay therefore to the Unmarried and Widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I; but if they cannot contain, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn.* So, *ver.* 38. *He that giveth his Virgin in Marriage, doth well; but he that giveth her not, doth better.* You evidently ſee Celibacy is preferred to Matrimony. And *ver.* 39, 40. *The Wife is bound by the Law as long as the Huſband liveth; but if her Huſband be dead, ſhe is at Liberty to be married to whom ſhe will, only in the Lord. But ſhe is happier, if ſhe ſo abide after my Judgment, and I think alſo I have the Spirit of God,* 1 Tim. v. 11. *The younger Widows refuſe, for when they have begun to wax wanton againſt* Chriſt *they will marry, having Damnation, becauſe they caſt off their firſt Faith.* So that according to the Doctrine of St. *Paul*, when People are ripened to the Senſe of Feeling, and find the glowing Warmth of all inſpiring Nature kindling them to Love and Procreation, it is notwithſtanding *Good*, if they can poſſibly forbear,

not

not to touch each other. A Doctrine deſtructive of mutual Happineſs, and if it could be practiſed by all, would depopulate Mankind, and finiſh human Race. Why then were the different Sex made? Why is Copulation ſinful only in Man? Why have they ſuch ſtrong Propenſities to it, that they run all Hazards for the Sake of Enjoyment? Why have they when mature and in the moſt perfect State of Health, ſuch Impulſe to it, as is next to invincible? If the Action be evil, why was there not another Way found out of producing the human Species? If it be proper to thank God for our Exiſtence, is it proper to blame the Means or Inſtruments he makes uſe of to accompliſh the End, for which we give Thanks. If it be evil to give Pain to, or take away Life from any of the human Kind; is not the contrary a Good, *viz*, to give Pleaſure, produce Life, and maintain the Production. A Nature and Conſequence oppoſite to Evil muſt be Good; for oppoſite Natures cannot both be evil, unleſs they are Extremes, and the Good conſiſts in a Medium, but in the preſent Caſe, a Medium is Indolence, and conſiſts in doing neither, or nothing. If therefore one be condemnable, the other ſhould be commendable. But though unmarried People's begetting and bringing up Children, is not a laudable Action by our Laws; yet is not the Charge and Trouble, which is the Conſequence of the Action, Puniſhment enough? If ſuch do no Injury to themſelves, they do none to the Public. 'Tis not good to bring Children into Being, without taking Care of that Being: For Creatures had better never be, than be miſerable. Therefore to beget Children in Wedlock, and not to provide for them, cannot be good; to produce and provide for them, though not in Wedlock, cannot be evil. What then is it ſanctifies one more than the other, when both are equally good to their Offſpring, but human Law? To be the Means of giving Exiſtence, is with reſpect to Man a Thing of Chance; therefore what Good attends it, is in Parents taking Care of their Offſpring, by educating them according to their Ability: What Duty is due from Children to their Parents is for this, not for their Exiſtence. To beget a Child is neither a good nor evil Action in itſelf, the Means or meer Action is barely following the Impulſe of Nature; but the Good or Evil of it is according to the Circumſtances attending it. Life in itſelf is neither Good nor Evil; the Good that is in Being, is in Well-being; and the Evil of it, lies in being miſerable. Marriage does not make the Begetters of Children Parents, more than Nature does; they that are properly ſo, diſcharge their Part to their Offſpring, and deſerve no Blame. Doctrines that prevent Marriage as much as poſſible, and when they cannot prevent, make it miſerable, by refuſing Redreſs to the Unhappy, are Doctrines of ſuch Piety as conſiſt in Rebellion againſt Nature, which muſt have very pernicious Effects: For Nature will be obeyed, and ought to be ſo under the Conduct of Reaſon.

I own myſelf pretty much indebted to that ſublime Reaſoner as well as Poet, Mr. JOHN MILTON, on the Subject of Divorce: And the Quotations which have no Author, are his; to which my own

Experience of happy and unhappy Wedlock hath been no ſmall Incitement. The following feeling Arguments flow from one that has had a two-fold Experience in matrimonial Bonds of Bliſs and Miſery, Love and Envy, Honour and Contempt in States as contrary as Light and Darkneſs, and as wide as Heaven and Hell, that have been like the Years of Plenty and Famine in *Egypt*; ſo that the former Plenty was forgotten by the following Famine, or like the rich Man in Torment with a Retroſpection of paſt Felicity, never more to return; the once joyous Days of Affection and Felicity, eclipſed by a ſullen Conſtellation of malignant Influence, bringing Confuſion within Doors and without. Let Silence conceal the reſt. *Tell it not in* Gath, *publiſh it not in* Aſkelon, *leſt the Daughters of* Rebellion *rejoice, and the Daughters of* Wantonneſs and Ingratitude *triumph.*

SOCIAL

SOCIAL BLISS CONSIDERED:

THE Words to which we are referred by *Jeſus Chriſt*, as the original Inſtitution of Marriage, are in *Geneſis* ii. where the Lord God is repreſented as having firſt made *Adam* to live by himſelf like a Batchelor, perhaps that he might know the Difference between that and a married State, and how the Addition of a ſocial Mate heightened his Bliſs. Whether it be true or not, as a Hiſtory, it adminiſters a very delicate Fable, or Parable; for from thence moſt excellent Leſſons for matrimonial Comfort and Inſtruction may be collected.

The Paſſage affords proper Subject for Meditation, to all thoſe that are already entered, or would enter into matrimonial Engagements: And this is ſufficient for my preſent Purpoſe.

In *Geneſis* ii, 18, *&c.* it is given us thus: *And the Lord God ſaid, it is not good that Man ſhould be alone; I will make an Help-meet for him.*

Ver. 21. *And the Lord God cauſed a deep Sleep to fall upon* Adam, *and he ſlept; and he took one of his Ribs, and cloſed up the Fleſh inſtead thereof.*

22. *And the Rib which the Lord God had taken from Man made he a Woman, and brought her unto the Man.*

23. *And* Adam *ſaid, this is now Bone of my Bones, and Fleſh of my Fleſh: She ſhall be called Woman, becauſe ſhe was taken out of Man.*

24. *Therefore ſhall a Man leave his Father and his Mother, and ſhall cleave unto his Wife: And they ſhall be one Fleſh.*

25. *And they were both naked, the Man and his Wife, and were not aſhamed.*

I have ſelected this Paſſage for my Meditation, not as a natural Hiſtory, but as a divine Fable; the moral of which, I intend to ſhew, is fraught with the moſt uſeful Leſſons for matrimonial Happineſs.

It is well known that the Wiſdom of the Ancients was delivered in Allegories, and the Wiſe only underſtood their Meaning. This was done, perhaps, to inform Men that the Fountain of Wiſdom conceals itſelf under the Veil of created Objects, that conſtantly preſenting themſelves to their bodily Senſes paſs and repaſs bebefore them, and are not reflected on with any Depth of Thought but by Men of Penetration and Inſight; theſe only *ſee the Lord in his Sanctuary*: That is, *God in his Creatures*. Any other manner of ſeeing God we ſeek in vain, for a different or diſtinct Viſion of him from this, *no Man ever did or can ſee*. It is adhering ſo ſtrictly,

and contending ſo zealouſly, for what Men know nothing of, *viz.* the Truth of the Letter in all its Parts, which makes People formally religious and no more; and by this Means they loſe what they contend for, *Religion* itſelf, or the true Spirit, Life and Eſſence of it. And by Reaſon of the Intricacy and Unuſefulneſs of the Argument to anſwer this plain and uſeful End, in going about to convince biblical Infidels of the Veracity of the Letter which they call ſacred, they make many more Infidels, and confirm thoſe that are *; becauſe the Reaſonings and Circumſtances that appear in this Age, can in no wiſe illuſtrate or corroborate Things of a different Kind; of which, no Tract of Proof remains in the preſent State of Things; and Men of no vulgar Inſpection will not be deluded by diſtant Proſpects and Repreſentations, which being differently and cloſely perceived by their natural Light, muſt neceſſarily appear to them as fictitious, with Fig-leaf Coverings. I ſhall therefore take another Courſe, not to perſuade Diſbelievers out of their Senſes, or differently than their common Senſe perſuades them and prevails with them to conceive; but to employ their Conceptions aright in an uſeful and proper Manner, without their being over-awed by Authority, or deluded by Enthuſiaſm, from making a true Judgment of Things, and drawing therefrom rational and uſeful Deductions.

We are not to ſuppoſe by the Paſſage of this antique Scripture before cited, becauſe the God is repreſented ſaying, *It is not good for Man to be alone*, that the making of Woman was an Afterthought in God, when he had tried how Man would be in a lonely State, as might be ſuggeſted from the Hiſtory; this is a Thought unbecoming us of Deity: But that Divine Wiſdom gives the Preference of human Happineſs to a matrimonial State, and has given Woman for the ſolace and delight of Man. She is to be a Remedy againſt Lonelineſs, to be chearful and gay, to comfort and delight him. This ſhews us, that the End and Deſign of Matrimony is to add to Man's Felicity; therefore when this End proves abortive, the Means are of no Value; and that Matrimony, which does not add to Man's Happineſs, is not of a Divine Inſtitution: There is nothing ſacred nor moral, nor any good Policy in it. A moral Inſtitution not effecting a moral End, is of no moral Validity; and therefore ought to be rectified to make it effective, or be eſteemed (as it is) of no Force or Conſequence.

It is not good that Man ſhould be alone; therefore it was not the Deſign

* As the Apoſtle ſays of others; *In going about to eſtabliſh their own Righteouſneſs, they have not ſubmitted to the Righteouſneſs of God.* Where's the Neceſſity of making the Belief of human Hiſtory a Part of Religion, if Men may be made virtuous and pious without ſuch Belief? Is it not contending more for the Covering, than the Body; and neglecting *the one Thing needful?* Nay, it is deſpiſing or neglecting a Pearl, for a Barley-corn; and, by contending for the Shadow, like *Æſop's* Dog in the Fable, the Subſtance is loſt.

Deſign of Divine Wiſdom that Man ſhould live a lonely Life, without the friendly and comfortable Aid of Female Help: Therefore ſaid God, *I will make a Help-meet*, or fit *for him*. This ſhews us what a true Wife is, or what a Wife ought to be, a *Help* fit for the Man ſhe has: She muſt be a Help, and a proper Help, or ſhe is no Wife, though ſhe may bear the Name; and if ſhe is no Wife, the Man is not married, he is not in the State of Matrimony; it is in the Nature of the Thing, and ought to be in Fact declared null and void; and conſequently ſuch a Man has a right to ſeek him a Wife, one that is a Help proper for him; for the former Bands are broke, the Covenant is void, becauſe the Conditions are not performed: For *it is not good that Man ſhould be alone*, and ſeeing he finds his Wants as great as before, and his Lonelineſs in formal Matrimony not cured in one, he has a Right to ſeek his own Good in another, by diſſolving that which Nature had before diſſolved, for that is by this declared invalid, and to have loſt its Force, having not the intrinſic Goodneſs it ought to have. And *it is not good that Man ſhould be alone*, but have *a Help-meet for him*: He that hath not a proper Help in a Female is alone, or in a lonely uncomfortable State, which it is not good for him to be in.

God made Woman for Man, and gave her to him, to be the Solace and Comfort of his Life: She therefore that is an Aſſiſtant, a fit and proper Aid and Comforter to a Man, is a Wife. I think it requires ſome peculiar Explanation to make theſe Words of God, *viz. It is not good for Man to be alone*, and thoſe of St. *Paul* to harmonize, *It is good for a Man not to touch a Woman*. But of this, and why Men generally find Miſery in a matrimonial State deſigned by Nature for their Happineſs, and what is the Remedy, I intend in the Sequel to ſhew.

And the Lord God cauſed a deep Sleep to fall upon Adam, *and he ſlept*. The Production of Woman was not intended to give Man Pain, but to obtund his Pains with growing Pleaſure. *And he ſlept*: Man being on the Brink of Matrimony becomes contemplative, he is thrown into a muſing State. *And he took one of his Ribs*: All Nature is then at work within him. *And he cloſed up the Fleſh inſtead thereof*: Love ſoftens the Nature of Man. *And the Rib which the Lord God had taken from Man made he a Woman*: The Nature of Man and Woman is as nearly the ſame, as a Man's *Rib* is to his Body. This in general; but more particularly, this was to make *Adam* a Wife. A Man's Wife therefore, is to be conſidered as a Part of his own Body; but this cannot be in a natural and moral Senſe, unleſs one Nature and Confederate moral Conduct be in both; if both love alike, both will agree to act alike. The Heart is defended with the Ribs, a Wife indeed is the Defender and Preſerver of her Huſband's Heart, not only by engroſſing his whole Heart, and guarding the Avenues of his Love and Life, but by her Softneſs and Pliableneſs, healing every Wound, or relieving every Pain that affects his Heart, *He cloſed up the Fleſh in Room thereof*. Her ſoft

endearing Nature cloſes up every Breach, heals the moſt dangerous Diſcord, and mollifies the moſt pungent Affliction. *And brought her to the Man:* This double-refin'd human Nature, this charming Form of Complaiſancy and Delight, the finiſh'd Piece of this Orb of Creatures, replete with every ſhining Grace and neceſſary Virtue yet wanting in Man to fill up the Meaſure of his Happineſs, was given to Woman; and Woman for this End was given to Man. Nature could go no higher, could produce no greater Work, nor Man could more deſire.

And Adam *ſaid, This is bone of my Bones, and Fleſh of my Fleſh; ſhe ſhall be called Woman, becauſe ſhe was taken out of Man.* Adam knew her Original, by her Form and Nature, ſo like himſelf; and conſequently her Behaviour was ſo pleaſing, that he pronounced her to be his own. This appears to be all the ſimple Form of Ceremony, by which they were united. We do not read that God acted the Part of a Prieſt to join them together, only that of a Father to the young Woman, in giving her away. *For he brought her to the Man:* Therefore the Father's Conſent with the Damſel, I conceive to be Ceremony ſufficient to conſecrate Matrimony. If a Man thus take a Woman, and declares her before God, or before good Witneſs, to be his Wife, is all I can find in the original Inſtitution. But the preſent Circumſtances of Things generally makes ſome particular Conditions or Covenants neceſſary.

A Woman who is a Meet-help to a Man, the Comfort and Solace of his Life, that is, *as Bone of his Bones, and Fleſh of his Fleſh*; or as if ſhe was taken out of him, that is as dear to him as his own Fleſh and Blood and Bones, is a joining worthy of God: From ſuch a Wife a Man would as ſoon break one of his Bones, as be divorced. One Fleſh and Bone is one Body, and one Body will have one Soul; her Exiſtence muſt ſeem to be from him, and his Life to be bound up in her.

Therefore ſhall a Man leave his Father and Mother, and ſhall cleave unto his Wife, and they ſhall be one Fleſh. Such as are ſo united, are of God's joining. To ſuch a Wife as has been deſcribed, a Man becomes nearer related in ſoul or Affection than to his Father or Mother, from whom his Body and Soul deſcended. By the Time Children come to a State of Maturity, the Affection between them and their Parents is much leſſened; then a new Affection is raiſed and increaſed towards a Wife, with whom, when there is an union in Spirit, it is a Joining, fit to be aſcribed to him who is a Spirit. There can be no nearer Relation, than ſuch who are ſo joined. He that before was one Fleſh of his Parents, is now become one Fleſh with his Wife; as if all that is dear now centered in her, they are one Fleſh in Likeneſs of Nature, in Fitneſs of Mind, and Diſpoſition. The ſame Fleſh muſt have the ſame Spirit; the ſame Soul muſt be in both, they cannot otherwiſe be united as one Fleſh. "As the "Unity of Minds is greater than "that of Bodies, ſo the Diſſimi-"litude is greater, the Difference "and Diſtinction more unlike. "The Likeneſs or Unlikeneſs in

"The

" human Nature joins or disjoins " the human Kind irreſiſtibly. " A Man cannot leave Father and " Mother and cleave to a no- " thing, to a worſe than nothing, " to an Adverſary. Can any " Law be ſo unreaſonable or in- " human to make Men cleave to " Calamity, to Miſery, to Ruin!" When the Parties joining are only of Man's joining, that is, without the eſſential Property of a cementing Nature; as is too generally the Caſe, when the Regard is had to Mammon, or to gender only, what is it better than Covetouſneſs or Whoredom?

I come now to conſider the laſt Verſe of the Paſſage before cited, which ſays, *And they were both naked, the Man and his Wife, and were not aſhamed.* The Needleſſneſs of this Expreſſion ſhews ſome deeper Senſe is aimed at in this Matter than what is barely narrative; what need had the Writer, as an Hiſtorian, to add theſe Words; for this muſt be neceſſarily underſtood, and known by every Reader, they were Huſband and Wife, Mr. *Adam* and Mrs. *Adam* *, and there was neither Man nor Woman to ſee them naked as they were; of what then ſhould they be aſhamed? But the myſtical, ſpiritual and internal Senſe is, that they were both innocent before God, and knew no Evil in their Enjoyments, therefore were not conſcious of Guilt. *Adam* was rouzed to Fruition at the great Call of Nature, and *Eve* ſpontaneouſly acquieſced without Offence. In this they obeyed the Command of the Lord God, *Increaſe and multiply:* Thus they anſwered the End of their Maker's Will, and ſinned not.

The Ceremonies of Marriage are various, among various Nations and People; but whatever they are, they are but Ceremonies, which Law and Cuſtom only make neceſſary, and are the leaſt Part of Matrimony; therefore thoſe that act towards each other on the Principles of natural Honeſty, without any Tie but that of Conſcience and conſtant Affection, though they ſin indeed againſt the Cuſtom of the Country, yet not to God, before whom *they walk naked and are not aſhamed.* And though Men may endeavour to put thoſe to Shame that tranſgreſs the Laws of Men, yet the Generality of thoſe that ſubmit to human Impoſitions, inconſiſtent with the Reaſon and Nature of the matrimonial State, are forced to own in the ſecret Senſe and Sorrow of their Souls, if not in Words, that *it is a Yoke, which neither they nor their Fathers were ever able to bear*; that is to ſay, ſuch is the ill-coupling of unfit Perſons, who are neither paired in Bodies, nor matched in Minds, it is moſt barbarous confining them in a State worſe than *Algerine* Slavery during Life. All that I intend to plead for, is a reaſonable Liberty of obeying the righteous Laws of God and Nature, that are conſiſtent with human Happineſs, the great End deſigned in a matrimonial State: And whatever Cuſtoms do by their natural Conſequence fruſtrate that End, do alſo make void the Inſti-

* *Geneſis* v. 2. *Male and Female created he them, and bleſſed them, and call-ed their name* Adam, *in the Day when they were created.*

Inſtitution, which originally aiming at the Happineſs of the contracting Parties is ſubverted, and conſequently annulled, when, by vicious Law or Cuſtom, it generally and naturally tends to their Unhappineſs. But I intend not hereby to excite any to evil Practice, but to ſet in a clear Light what virtuous Freedom ought to be enjoyed, and what natural Liberty may be indulged, conſiſtent with private Happineſs and the public Tranquility. Virtuous Actions do not ariſe from Conſtraint, but from natural Inſtinct, pure Motives, and human Affections.

I have conſidered the original Inſtitution of Matrimony, or what is recommended to us for ſuch; and have found the true Nature of it in the Qualifications of a Wife, from what is given us as the Hiſtory of the *firſt Adam*, the ſuppoſed Father of Mankind: I intend next to conſider, what (as we are told) the *ſecond Adam* (as he is called) has ſaid on this Subject:

The Words I intend to conſider, are in *Matthew* xix. v. 3. to the 12th.

3. *The Phariſees alſo came unto him, and ſaying unto him, Is it lawful for a Man to put away his Wife for every Cauſe?*

4. *And he anſwered and ſaid unto them, have ye not read, that he which made them at the Beginning made them Male and Female?*

5. *And ſaid, for this Cauſe ſhall a Man leave Father and Mother, and ſhall cleave to his Wife; and they Twain ſhall be one Fleſh.*

6. *Wherefore they are no more Twain, but one Fleſh; what therefore God hath joined together let not Man put aſunder.*

7. *They ſay unto him, why did* Moſes *then command to give a Writing of Divorcement, and put her away?*

8. *He ſaith unto him,* Moſes, *becauſe of the Hardneſs of your Hearts, ſuffered you to put away your Wives; but from the Beginning it was not ſo.*

9. *And I ſay unto you, whoſoever ſhall put away his Wife, except it be for Fornication, and ſhall marry another, committeth Adultery; and whoſo marrieth her, which is put away, doth commit Adultery.*

10. *His Diſciples ſay unto him, If the Caſe of a Man be ſo with his Wife, it is not good to marry.*

11. *But he ſaid unto them, all Men cannot receive this ſaying, ſave they to whom it is given.*

12. *For there are ſome Eunuchs, which were ſo born, from their Mother's Womb; and there are ſome Eunuchs which are made Eunuchs of Men; and there be Eunuchs which have made themſelves Eunuchs, for the Kingdom of Heaven's Sake: He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.*

St. *Mark*, chap. x. relates it thus:

Ver. 2. *And the Phariſees came to him, and aſked him, Is it lawful for a Man to put away his Wife? Tempting him.*

3. *And he anſwered and ſaid unto them, what did* Moſes *command you?*

4. *And they ſaid,* Moſes *ſuffered to write a Bill of Divorcement, and to put her away.*

5. *And* Jeſus *anſwered and ſaid unto*

unto them, for the Hardneſs of your Heart he wrote you this Precept.

6. *But from the Beginning of the Creation God made them Male and Female.*

7. *For this Cauſe ſhall a Man leave his Father and Mother, and cleave to his Wife.*

8. *And they Twain ſhall be one Fleſh; ſo then they are no more Twain, but one Fleſh.*

9. *What therefore God hath joined together let not Man put aſunder.*

10. *And in the Houſe the Diſciples aſked him again of the ſame Matter.*

11. *And he ſaith unto them, whoſoever ſhall put away his Wife, and marry another, committeth Adultery againſt her.*

12. *And if a Woman ſhall put away her Huſband, and be married to another, ſhe committeth Adultery.*

It is evident that theſe two Relations of the ſame Fact do not exactly agree. The Queſtion put by the Phariſees, is not the ſame in one as in another; nor *Chriſt*'s Anſwer to them the ſame; nor do the Words cited agree with thoſe they refer to; therefore, whatever Error may be found in them, ſaid to be ſpoken by *Jeſus Chriſt*, is not to be attributed to him, but to the Writers: For the Diſagreement of a Relation ſhews the Imperfection of the Relaters; and that they had not a critical Regard to Truth or Knowledge of it, as its profeſſed Promulgators ought to have. But theſe, tho' Saints, were Men; and, as Men, were liable to err: Therefore they (or ſome others in their Name, which is ſtill more likely) might poſſibly deliver to us, as the Words of *Chriſt*, ſuch Words as were never ſpoken by him. This I am neceſſitated to acknowledge, to clear our Lord of ſpeaking ſuch Words *as never Man ſpake* that were ſpake becoming a Man, which are aſcribed in ſome of the foregoing Words to him, and which are *not true*, compared with the Original referred to, nor right in the Nature of Things.

It may be thought by ſome, that the Errors here complained of, are ſmall, and therefore ought to have been ſoftly paſſed over; or that, however, it does not deſerve ſo ſevere a Cenſure. I would willingly make the beſt of it, even by ſpiritualizing the Letter away, if the Caſe would allow it; but this Diſcourſe of *Jeſus Chriſt* and the Phariſees is not of that Nature to bear ſuch Uſage, without committing Violence to the Text; and the Text is of ſuch Sort, as will upon Examination appear to be given by the Spirit of the Church, a Spirit, that under a Pretence of extraordinary refin'd Sanctity, is deſtructive of human Happineſs and human Exiſtence; and therefore I cannot ſuppoſe *Jeſus Chriſt* the Author of this Diſcourſe, which in *Matthew* and *Mark* is aſcribed to him.

The Queſtion aſked *Jeſus Chriſt* by the Phariſees in *Matthew* and *Mark*, is not the ſame. In the *former* it is, *Is it lawful for a Man to put away his Wife, for* EVERY *Cauſe?* In the *Latter*, the Queſtion ſeems to be, Whether a Man may put away his Wife for ANY Cauſe? As there is a vaſt Difference between theſe Queſtions, ſo they require a different Anſwer; the former a Negative, the latter a Poſitive one; becauſe it is not fit to indulge a capricious Humour

Humour with too arbitrary a Power; but a reaſonable Authority to puniſh incorrigible Offenders, is neceſſary in every Sort of Government: And as it is not fit a Man ſhould gratify a peeviſh Temper for every ſlight Occaſion, ſo it is not fit he ſhould be obliged to bear all Abuſes, Inſults and conſtant Provocations from an implacable Spirit, without Ability to remedy his Condition. Nor is it more tolerable on the Woman's Side, that has the Misfortune to be daily abuſed by an unnatural Brute, falſely called a Huſband.

St. *Mark* ſays, the Phariſees aſked *Jeſus* this Queſtion, *tempting him.* I ſuppoſe, he means, to try or know his Judgment, he being, as 'tis ſaid or ſuppoſed, of the Sect of the *Eſſenes*, who profeſſed a Community of Goods, and ſhunned all Pleaſures, even Marriage, and all carnal Copulation with Women; from whence, perhaps, the Chriſtian Monkery took its riſe. I muſt own, it is *tempting* the Reader to know what St. *Mark* means by the Words *tempting him.*

And, ſaith Matthew, *he anſwered and ſaid unto them, have ye not read, that he which made them at the Beginning, made them Male and Female; and ſaid, for this Cauſe ſhall a Man leave Father and Mother, and ſhall cleave to his Wife, and they Twain ſhall be one Fleſh?* Had I been one of the Phariſees, I ſhould have replied, No certainly, we have not read any ſuch Thing, that he who made Man at the Beginning ſaid theſe Words, for where we have theſe Words in *Geneſis* (which have been already conſidered) they either appear to be the Words of *Adam*, or of the Writer; not of *Adam*'s Maker. Its plain, the Writers of the New Teſtament were not well acquainted with the Old, by moſt Things they cite from thence. This Citation is falſe, and falſely applied; therefore theſe are not the Words of the *Lord Jeſus, who knew all Things*, but of the ignorant Writer, who knew not what he was writing about, and refer to a Hiſtory that they did not underſtand.

Now, if the Foundation which the Argument is built on is wrong, then the Argument is falſe, and the Conſequence drawn from it erroneous. Here it ſays, *becauſe God made Man Male and Female, therefore Man ſhall leave his Father and Mother, and cleave to his Wife.* In *Geneſis* it ſays no ſuch Thing: There we read, that *Adam* ſaid, *This is now Bone of my Bones, and Fleſh of my Fleſh; ſhe ſhall be called Woman, becauſe ſhe was taken out of Man. Therefore ſhall a Man leave Father and Mother, and cleave unto his Wife, and they ſhall be one Fleſh.* 'Tis not clear, whether the latter Verſe contains the Words of *Adam*, or of the Hiſtorian; but 'tis very clear they are not the Words of *Adam*'s Maker. In *Matthew* and *Mark*, 'tis ſaid, *God created Man Male and Female, and for this Cauſe ſhall a Man leave his Father and Mother and cleave to his Wife.* Is the Difference of Gender then all that is neceſſary for Matrimony? And is it for *this* Cauſe that God has joined them together, and no Man muſt put them aſunder? Are we admoniſhed not to marry, merely for the Gratification of carnal Luſt; and is this, notwithſtanding, repreſented to be the ſole Cauſe why a Man ſhould leave Father and Mother, and cleave

cleave to his Wife? Why may he not, for the ſame Reaſon, cleave to a Harlot? If this be a ſufficient Qualification for God's joining, theſe alſo are joined together by him: For St. *Paul* ſays, *he that is joined to a Harlot is one Fleſh.* Therefore God's creating them Male and Female is not the true and ſole Cauſe that conſtitutes Man and Wife; therefore the meer joining Male to Female, is not what is meant by God's joining, and therefore we are miſinformed when we are told, that *he who made them in the Beginning, made them Male and Female, and ſaid* FOR THIS CAUSE *ſhall a Man leave Father and Mother, and cleave to his Wife.* Nor does the Formality of joining, called the Ordinance, make it of God's joining; for is all that the Parſon does, God's Doings? If ever it was eſteemed ſo, it muſt have been when Parſons were eſteemed as Gods: None but Idolaters eſteem them ſo now. If the Ceremony that joins them, makes it God's joining, though done by Man, let it be proved that it was ordered and preſcribed of God in any other Senſe than what human Laws and Ceremonies may be ſaid to be; or that God's joining can be underſtood in any other Light than the Moral of the Fable in *Geneſis* directs us to, which has been explained, *viz. It is not good that Man ſhould be alone, I will make an Help-meet for him,* But the Words contain no Prohibition, that Man may not put aſunder what Man puts together.

Yet what is moſt ſurpriſing, *Jeſus Chriſt* (as his Words are ſet forth to us) ſo far diſcountenances the joining of Male and Female, as if he intended to aboliſh his Father's Law, *increaſe and multiply*; as well as the Law of *Moſes*, for Divorce: For, to prevent Marriage and Multiplication, he is ſaid to recommend Celibacy and Mutilation; too plainly, I fear, to be denied, and too groſly to be defended, as will hereafter appear.

If the Queſtion of the Phariſees was, as in *Matthew*, *Is it lawful for a Man to put away his Wife for every Cauſe?* Then the Anſwer given to it carries the Matter from one Extreme to another; and *Jeſus Chriſt* by interpreting the Law of *Moſes* concerning Divorce, condemns and annuls it, if the Anſwer means that thoſe joined by Men, are of God's joining; for the following Words are, *What therefore God has joined together let not Man put aſunder:* This interpreting the Law of *Moſes* is, as we are obliged to interpret the Goſpel to expound many of its Precepts and Doctrines away, to make them agree with Reaſon: But the Anſwer of *Jeſus Chriſt* contains an Explanation contrary to the Reaſon and Fitneſs of the Thing, if the Senſe of the Text be as is commonly underſtood. If it is to be otherwiſe taken, who can be certain he hits the Truth in explaining a Text, when the Text itſelf appears to be ſo far off from the Truth, that in order to find the one, we are obliged to explain away the other.

'Tis no Wonder the *Jews* believed *Jeſus* not to be of God, becauſe they believed *Moſes* was, and that he had faithfully delivered to them the Laws of God; if *Jeſus* therefore ſignified that God had given different Laws to Men, than

than *Moſes* gave; this ſtrongly implied to them that were prepoſſeſſed in their Opinions in Favour of *Moſes*, that *Jeſus* was not of God, becauſe he in Contradiction to his own Declaration that he *came not to deſtroy the Law, but to fulfil it*, deſtroyed the Law by explaining it away. And they might probably argue, that it was impoſſible that God having an immutable Will (as muſt be the Conſequence of perfect Wiſdom) ſhould give different Laws to his People at different Times: And therefore perhaps, it is, that in the ſacred Book, the Law or Cuſtom of Sacrifices is as old as *Cain* and *Abel*. On this Conſideration 'tis no Wonder I ſay, *they could not believe*, and that God himſelf had by this Means *hardened their Hearts*. What a Meſſage then was the Meſſiah ſent about!

The Phariſees objected their Law of Divorce given by *Moſes*, to thoſe Words, *what therefore God has joined together, let not Man put aſunder*. No doubt but what God does is right, and we are not to blame his Doings; but then the great Difficulty is to know what God's Doings are, diſtinct from Man's in this Caſe, if they are not to be underſtood in a *moral* Senſe. In this Senſe, who thoſe are that God joins together, we have ſeen in the Caſe of *Adam* and *Eve* referred to, and conſequently what Marriages are properly of God's joining; and that ſuch Perſons who are as dear to each other as their *own Fleſh and Blood and Bones*, as their *own Souls*, all Men muſt own that no Man ought to put aſunder. And this alſo implies, that ſuch are not ſo joined, who are not proper Helps to each other, but the contrary, though Male and Female: If ſuch come together, they are not Huſband and Wife, and therefore *ought to be put aſunder*. Every Command given with Reaſon binds our Obedience no otherwiſe than that Reaſon holds, and a Command *without* Reaſon is arbitrary; *againſt* Reaſon, is unjuſt; both theſe bind no longer than the Power binds. But that all who are married by the Prieſt, are of God's joining, and therefore ought never to be parted; or that their being *Male* and *Female* is all the neceſſary Qualification for that Inſtitution, cannot be the Meaning though it be the Letter of the Expreſſion; and therefore, if theſe were the Words of *Chriſt*, he ſpake a great deal more, which the Tranſcribers or Prieſts have curtailed and mangled, to give it a Jeſuitical Explanation for the Service of the Church, the Sons of which always make *him* ſay what ſerves *their* Turn, and to reaſon as weakly as they are wicked.

If Man, becauſe they are *Male* and *Female*, are to be joined together, this Reaſon will ever take Place; but this is *carnal* Reaſon: Nor, if this be all that joins them, *Man* need not put them aſunder; for they will come aſunder of themſelves.

Becauſe of the Hardneſs of your Hearts, Moſes *wrote you this Precept* of Divorce, which runs thus: *Deut.* xxiv. 1. *When a Man hath taken a Wife, and married her, and it came to paſs that ſhe find no Favour in his Eyes, becauſe he hath found ſome Uncleanneſs in her; then let him write her a Bill of Divorcement, and give it in her Hand, and ſend*

ſend her out of his Houſe. The Meaning of which, I ſuppoſe to be, that when a Woman, which a Man has taken to be his Wife, is become a filthy Creature in his Eyes, and he cannot love her, let him put her away; for this is the only Remedy to make both Parties eaſy, ſince a Woman of any good and tender Diſpoſition muſt be very unhappy to ſee herſelf contemned and deſpiſed by her Huſband, and conſequently much better pleaſed to be rid of ſuch a Huſband, and throw herſelf into the Arms of one that ſhe can render herſelf agreeable to, and will treat her with Humanity and Tenderneſs. And a Man the more he is conſtrained to live with a Woman, that is diſagreeable to him, will hate her the more. That the Huſband might not uſe this Power capriciouſly, *Moſes* does not permit him to take her again: Therefore wiſely adds, *and when ſhe is departed out of his Houſe, ſhe may go and be another Man's Wife. And if the latter Huſband hate her, and write her a Bill of Divorcement, and giveth it into her Hand, and ſendeth her out of his Houſe; or if the latter Huſband die, which took her to be his Wife, her former Huſband which ſent her away may not take her again to be his Wife, after that ſhe is defiled; for that is an Abomination before the Lord,* &c. Now, if this permiſſive Law was given by *Moſes*, ſo were the reſt; for after this, and ſeveral others that follow, *Chap.* xxvi. 16. *Moſes* tells them, ſaying, *This Day the Lord thy God hath commanded thee to do theſe Statutes and Judgments.* So that *Moſes* had this Law from God, as much as he had others; and therefore, whatever may be ſuppoſed or inſinuated of one Law, may be ſuppoſed or inſinuated of all the reſt.

'Tis hard to know or underſtand what this Saying means. *Moſes, becauſe of the Hardneſs of your Heart, wrote you this Precept.* If this charges *Moſes* with impoſing bad Laws on his Nation, in the Name of God, then he gave them Laws to pleaſe them, rather than ſuch as were good. If God gave Man a different Law from the Beginning than *Moſes* afterwards gave, that Law of *Moſes* was different from the Law of God; and there can be no better Pretence for repealing it: But how this appears to be true, the Bible no where diſcovers. *Adam* could not put away his Wife, nor ſhe him, and marry another, if there was not another Man nor Woman in the World; and it would be a great Reflection on him that made *Adam*, that he could not, or would not make a Woman to pleaſe him; but, on the contrary we are told, God made a *Help-meet for him*, and made her out of ſuch Stuff as *Adam* could not chuſe but Love, if he loved himſelf: Therefore this Inſtance is not applicable to the Caſe of Divorce, nothing can juſtly be reaſoned from it; and that which is, appears to be in the common Senſe of it, a ſophiſtical and unintelligible Expreſſion, not well formed from the Premiſes, nor applicable to the Purpoſe. There are ſcarce any Precepts or Principles, ſaid to be delivered by *Jeſus Chriſt*, that are not either diſtant from Plainneſs, or from Truth, if taken according to the ſtrict Letter Senſe; hence it is, that Men learn and are never the

better;

better; and hence it is, that ſuch Inſtructions have done little good in the World; and that the Teachers themſelves cannot agree, becauſe they cannot underſtand. Therefore, hitherto the Senſe of this boaſted Revelation is unrevealed; and therefore hath not, becauſe it could not bring *Peace on Earth, and Good-will to Men*; but, on the contrary, *Fire and Sword*, which was willed * to be kindled by the Revealer, and ever ſince has been, and is ever like to be, the *everlaſting Fire that never can be quenched*. So true it is, that *without a Parable ſpake he not unto them*, that what are delivered to us for his Words want ſo much expounding, that one might be almoſt tempted to think them delivered ſo darkly, as if on Purpoſe to oblige the Expoſitors and Commentators, and keep up the ſpiritual Traffic of the Myſteries of the Kingdom, which create Factions, Schiſms and Diviſions. If you aſk to what End, or for what Cauſe then *Chriſt* came, he is ſaid himſelf to anſwer: *Suppoſe ye that I came to give Peace on Earth, I tell you nay, but rather Diviſion*, &c. That this has been the Conſequence of his coming, Believers are forced to own: Why then may we not believe him that he came for that Purpoſe, if the Letter be true, ſince himſelf confeſſes it? But, ſay Infidels, As ſcarce any Man that intends Miſchief, publickly declares it, this is as ſtrong a Proof of Enthuſiaſm as can be given; and what from another Man, would ſhock every Reader. Can any Thing worſe, ſay they, be ſaid of him, than he here is reported to ſay of himſelf? I ſay *reported*, for I cannot believe *Jeſus Chriſt* ſaid theſe Words; which is the only Defence I can make, becauſe to me they ſeem to be indefenſible. For Infidels further argue, that though this Expreſſion may, by Art and a lucky Thought, be made to put on a ſpiritual Meaning, who can prove that the Speaker's Meaning (or Writer's rather) was the ſame as the Expounder's; why then, ſay they, muſt it be wrapt up in the Spirit, and expounded away? And if it be literally true, 'tis terrible! I muſt confeſs I cannot Anſwer theſe Objections, and therefore I put forth the Riddle to them that aſſiſted by the Grace of *Chriſt* can do it, and whoſe Buſineſs it is ſo to do, who are *Ambaſſadors in Chriſt's Stead*. I muſt own, that I think had *Chriſt* uttered ſuch an Expreſſion, it had been Wiſdom to conceal it. Methinks it is Pity he in his great Humility choſe *the Fools of this World*, as he did, to be the Hiſtorians of his Life; for it muſt be Matter of Concern to Believers, to read in ſo *holy* a Book what cannot poſſibly be productive of any Good, and gives the Enemies of our bleſſed Lord and his holy Goſpel Occaſion of Reproach and Triumph. This is an ill Recommendation of the Goſpel and Character of *Jeſus*. But theſe Things ſhould be treated tenderly, leſt the Profane have them in Deriſion, and the Enemy, exulting ſay, as of pious *David* and his Men of old, *Where is now their God?* Or, as *Pilate* ſaid of *Chriſt*, when crowned with Thorns, *Behold the Man*. It muſt be confeſſed, that the Doctrines even of Truth,

* *Luke* xii. 49.

Truth, delivered in obſcure Phraſes, lead the Mind from the Path of Truth, and raiſe up Enemies againſt it.

The Law that is againſt Divorce, is againſt virtuous Nature; becauſe it hinders Nature from taking its Courſe, when Virtue is the only Motive that it ſhould do ſo to promote a Life of Love and Virtue, which a vicious Mate is deſtructive of. What Law ſoever prevents this, cannot be good, but is injurious to human Felicity, and deſtructive of moral Virtue, of Religion and Humanity. The Author of ſuch Law cannot poſſibly be eſteemed the Redeemer, but muſt neceſſarily be judged to be the Enſlaver of Mankind. To make *Chriſt* therefore the Author of this Law, is blaſpheming his Character as a Redeemer, and degrading his Divine Dignity. For as Matrimony now is, "If we do "but err in our Choice (the moſt "unblameable Error that can be, "being blind to future Events) "when the mighty conjoining "Syllables are pronounced by "thoſe that take upon them to "join Heaven and Hell together "unpardonably till Death par-"dons, this that looked but now "like a Divine Bleſſing with a "graceful Smile and gentle Rea-"ſon, ſtraight vaniſhes like a fair "Sky, and brings on ſuch a "Scene of Clouds and Tempeſt "as turns all to Shipwreck, "without a Haven or Shore, but "ranſomleſs Captivity." We are allowed to procure and apply phyſical Remedies againſt Diſeaſes of the Body, and why not againſt Diſeaſes of the Mind, in, and ariſing from a matrimonial State? And why not againſt the State of Matrimony as the State of the Public? For that which is of private Concern to every one, is of public Concern to all. Do not Grievances of the State and the Mind deſerve and demand our Regard and Remedy, as much as thoſe of the Body?

When Marriage does not mend a Man's State, it marrs it; if it does not cure his Loneſomeneſs, it makes him more lonely than a ſingle Life, wherein a Man naturally ſeeks the Comfort his Condition affords, or ſeeks with Hope to mend it. In an uncomfortable married Condition, the Man or Woman beholds the perpetual Scene of Diſappointment always preſent, and perpetually feels the Senſe of its anguiſh, which diſpoſes the unhappy Wretch to Loneſomeneſs, Dejection of Mind and Melancholy, to a diſagreeable State of Mind and dangerous Conduct; though Male and Female have been joined: This then is not Marriage, where the Harmony of Souls is wanting.

Theſe Things being conſidered, the Queſtion will be, Whether *Moſes* gave the Law of Divorce to indulge *Hardneſs of Heart*, or whether it is not rather *Hard-heartedneſs* to deny the Liberty of Separation to thoſe who are miſerably joined? Is this *God's* Work that muſt not be undone, though it had better never have been done at all? But being done, why muſt all natural Means of Relief be debarred? Sure this *Prohibition* is a Demonſtration of *Hardneſs of Heart* with a Witneſs. It ſeems to me, that it had been equally reaſonable, if this Precept had been given, whom God has made miſerable by Pains, Pover-

ty, Sickneſs, Diſeaſe, or Wretchedneſs of any Kind, let no Man help or relieve; becauſe it is God's doing. This, I think, would have been juſt as good, right, humane and reaſonable.

Did *Moſes* write the Precept of Divorce to the *Jews*, becauſe of *the Hardneſs of their Hearts*; and was this Precept the Cure for that Malady? Why then did *Jeſus* forbid it? If it was no Cure, why did *Moſes* give it? Or did God give it as a Trial for a Cure, as a Phyſician in an unknown and unaccountable Diſtemper gives Remedies by gueſs, and when he finds the Preſcription ill applied, or not anſwering the End, forbids the taking it? Men muſt be very ſtupid to aſſert this. But if this was not the Caſe, or ſomething like it, why did God command at one Time, what he forbad at another? This is making God a mere Empiric, whoſe Conduct is directed by Practice and Experience; and when his own Experiments are not ſigned with *probatum eſt*, he depends on that of others. When Men cannot ſee Things inviſible within the human Body, they may be nonpluſed: But if God made Man's Frame and Conſtitution, he muſt needs know what Infirmities and Failings he has made him liable to, and how to apply a proper Remedy, if he is Almighty and All-wiſe.

This Precept of Divorce appears as much to be the Law of God by *Moſes*, as any other Laws given by *Moſes* were, (the Ten Commandments excepted;) for *Moſes* does not appear to have been compelled to give this Precept as a Permiſſion by the Obſtinacy of his Nation, againſt his own Judgment; and as there are not the leaſt Appearances of Reaſon to ground this Conjecture on, ſo there is no Reaſon to believe, that any Thing like it was the Motive which induced him to grant this Indulgence; or, that he gave it by Connivance, as a Permiſſion, rather than a Law.

This *Hardneſs of Heart* being conſtitutional from certain Cauſes, Why did the Phyſician of Souls forbid *hard Hearts to be mollified with this* Moſaic *Ointment* of Divorce? *Is there no Balm in* Gilead, *is there no Phyſician there? Why then is the Health of the Daughter of my People* forbid to be *recovered?*

The gracious Lord *Jeſus* was no Enemy to the *Adultreſs*, who was taken *in the very act*; for he pleaded her Cauſe in ſo friendly a Manner, as though it had been the leaſt of all Sins; * *He that is without Sin among you* (ſaid he) *let him firſt caſt a Stone at her.* Probably *Chriſt* knew the Circumſtances of her Adultery, and her Penitence and Humility to be ſuch, as rendered her worthy his being her *Advocate*; and this might have been a Trap laid againſt her Life, ſeeing ſhe was caught in the very Act; though the Hiſtorian don't acquaint us with the Circumſtances. The evangelical Writers give very lame and imperfect Accounts of Things; which have given Room for many Alterations, Interpretations, and Interpolations: Tho', theſe Things conſidered, this Precedent is not to be taken as an Encouragement to *Adultery*, as though it was the leaſt of all Sins; yet, I think, we may make this Appli-

* *John* viii. 7.

Application of it, not to condemn thoſe that are guilty of this *innocent Adultery* (if it muſt be called Adultery), of putting away a Tormentor, and taking a delightful Companion in room thereof.

Or do theſe Words, *for the Hardneſs of your Hearts* Moſes *wrote you this Precept*, mean, that it was neceſſary Men ſhould be indulged in this Liberty in putting away their Wives, leſt if they were debarred they would be hard-hearted to them, and treat them very ill? If this be what theſe Words mean, the Reaſon remains good ſtill; becauſe Men are not changed, their Hearts are as hard as ever; the Goſpel has not ſoftned them at all: Then the Law is good ſtill, and founded on good Reaſon. Divorces were allowed to prevent worſe Conſequences, which is the Intention of all good Laws, they are given to prevent the greater Evils, for the beſt cannot prevent ALL bad Conſequences; becauſe Good and Evil are ſo intermixt and interwoven into the Nature of Things, that Laws for a public or general Good, are productive of ſome particular Evils; and Laws enacting Things injurious to the Public, are productive of Good to ſome particular Perſons. If *Moſes* gave a Command that Men ſhould put away the Wives they diſliked, to prevent their being hard-hearted to them, and uſing them cruelly or unjuſtly; *Moſes* enacted a good Law, which it is evil to annul; and then prohibiting Divorces, is a hard-hearted and cruel Prohibition, unjuſt in its Nature, and evil in its Conſequences. And if Men are to be known, as a Tree by its Fruits, no good Man could bring forth ſuch evil Fruits, as to repeal this excellent Law, given to ſoften the hard Heart of Man.

Becauſe of the Hardneſs of your Hearts Moſes *wrote you this Precept.* Therefore it was a proper Means to ſoften hard Hearts, which would have been cruel had they been deprived of all Means of Cure: As with us, where the Poor have no Remedy but Death, which deſperate Remedy makes the Diſeaſe deſperate. "The "Nature of Man is ſtill as weak, "and their Hearts are as hard as "ever, and that Weakneſs and "Hardneſs as unfit and untract-"able to be harſhly uſed as ever: "Seeing therefore that all the "Cauſes of any Allowance that "the *Jews* might have, remain "as well to the Chriſtians: This "is a certain Rule, that as long "as the Cauſes remain, the Al-"lowance ought."

But from the Beginning it was not ſo. If this be a Rule to determine and diſtinguiſh, what are the Laws of God, and what of *Moſes*, then 'tis a Rule to determine other Laws by, whether they are from God or no, by whomſoever they are given, *viz.* the Laws of God for the Government of human Nature exiſted with Man, and is imprinted in him, and then there is no other Law than natural Reaſon and Fitneſs, conſequently all Laws are to be referred to this: If nothing can be the Law of God, which from the Beginning was not ſo. If the Laws of God are known by their being before *Moſes*, and conſequently independent of him; they are alſo before *Jeſus*, and independent of him; the one could not make them, or make them known, which were not made or known before, nor

the other make them void: Then all the Laws of God are as irrevocable, as the general Courſe of Things and human Nature as unchangeable.

'Tis ſaid in old Time, *the Sons of God ſaw the Daughters of Men, and took them Wives of all they liked*; and undoubtedly they put away all they did not like: For as their own liking was the Rule of their Choice, conſequently their diſliking was the Rule for their Refuſal, both before chuſing and after: For when Man is left at Liberty to act according to Nature, the liking and diſliking will always be his diſtinguiſhing Rule of Choice and Refuſal in all Things, but in nothing more ſo, than in embracing a Woman for a Wife; he cannot do otherwiſe, unleſs he is compelled by ſome greater Neceſſity, which deſtroying his free Power of Election and Rejection muſt conſequently deſtroy his Happineſs: Therefore to ſay concerning Divorce, *from the Beginning it was not ſo*, is not true; for from the Beginning that it could be ſo, it was ſo.

And I ſay unto you, whoſoever ſhall put away his Wife, except it be for Fornication, and ſhall marry another committeth Adultery; and whoſo marrieth her that is put away, doth commit Adultery. St. Mark *adds, if a Woman ſhall put away her Huſband, and be married to another, ſhe committeth Adultery.*

St. *Mark* tells us, that the Diſciples at another Time aſked him about this Matter, and received an abſolute Anſwer, without a Reaſon to enforce or explain it, and they ſeemed to be content with it; for *Jeſus taught them as one having Authority, and not as the Scribes:* 'Tis likely therefore, that they reaſoned, but his *ipſe dixit* was ſufficient, conſidering his Perſon, as it carried the more Authority with it. *I ſay unto you*, is an authoritative Expreſſion. *Verily, verily*, were the two Witneſſes to atteſt the Truth of what he ſaid, and the Reaſons to illuſtrate it.

Abſolute Authority may command or pronounce what it pleaſes, but cannot make that wrong which in the Nature of Things is right, or that right which in the Face of Reaſon is wrong; which is the Rule for all Men to judge of Right and Wrong by, but thoſe who know not the Uſe of Reaſon, any Thing may be right or wrong, good or evil: For thoſe that have not a right Rule to judge by, can never form a right Judgment of Men and Things. Arbitrary Power may be moſt proper to be exerciſed in governing mad Men and Fools, but rational Creatures can ſubmit only to the Authority of Reaſon, in determining what are juſt and unjuſt Actions; therefore with all ſuch, a Mandate or Sentence void of Reaſon, is void of Authority; and that to which none is joined, or can be underſtood, but the Will and Pleaſure of the Speaker, will only be regarded or rejected as his peculiar Power or Wiſdom is, or is conceived to be, to inforce it. But to a Man that judges reaſonably of Things, a Command without Reaſon, is no Command at all; and, contrary to Reaſon, is to be deſpiſed, and ought not to be obeyed.

Reaſon or common Senſe is that Rule by which all Rules are to be tried; the indelible Law of human

human Nature, prior and ſuperior to all Laws, which whatever cannot ſtand the Teſt of, is evidently wrong. If arbitrary Law, without Reaſon, and even againſt Reaſon be right, any Impoſition is right; and one bare Aſſertion is equal to another, when no Reaſon is given for either. That which does not carry its own Reaſon with it till the Reaſon be diſcovered, is no Law: It can bind no further than lawleſs Power binds it. 'Tis not the Perſon but the Reaſon makes the Law, for Law is always conſidered as founded on Reaſon, without this 'tis not properly Law or Juſtice, but Oppreſſion and Injuſtice. This inſtead of healing the little Diſorders in the body Politic, is ſuch a quack Medicine as fixes it in the Blood, which makes a Cut a Gangrene, converts a ſlight Cold or Indigeſtion to a malignant Fever, or a ſlight Fever to a mortal Plague or deadly Infection; and all that make abſolute irrational Laws, are political Quacks; who, to ſay the beſt that caſt be ſaid of them, are evidently ignorant of human Nature. Is undivorcible Matrimony, when miſerable, the *Yoke that is eaſy, and the Burden that is light*, which we are called upon to take on us? Or, can this Doctrine be recommended as ſuch?

It is a Queſtion what the Word *Fornication* in the Text means. Some think it ſignifies Uncleanneſs, and refer to the Senſe of the Law. *When a Man hath taken a Wife and married her, and it come to paſs ſhe find no Favour in his Eyes, becauſe he hath found ſome* Uncleanneſs *in her.* But if our ſpiritual Doctors and Dictators take the Word *Fornication* in its right Senſe, it is ſtrange to me, that it is not rather called *Adultery*; for *Fornication* is explained to be the Act of Copulation of unmarried Perſons: But if a married Woman be guilty of this Act with any other Man than her Huſband, it is termed *Adultery*; ſo that according to the common Senſe of the Word *Fornication*, a married Woman cannot be guilty of it, unleſs it mean the Action committed before Marriage. If this, and this only give Right to a Man to divorce his Wife, then every Man who marries one that has been tampering or trying with another beforehand, ought to have the Libetty of Divorce in his own Power; but if Mr. *M———n* could have obtained this, it might have ſaved him much trouble, and ſome thouſands of Pounds Expence, by the Confeſſion of his dear Fornicatreſs *T——a C——a P----ps.* He is an Inſtance, that the moſt religious Men when hampered with a Torment, will run any Hazard to obtain the much-deſired Redemption, and chuſe with *David, rather to fall into the Hands of God, than of Man* or Woman: And ſhe is a Proof that ſome Wives will drive Men to Hell, though they are ſure to follow them in, rather than be divorced from their Subſtance. And therefore the Reaſonableneſs of this Liberty does moſt evidently appear in all ſuch Caſes wherein it is moſt ardently ſought for.

If by the Word *Wife* here meant, is a Woman joined in Wedlock to a Man, to whom ſhe is a Deſtroyer of his Peace, his Health and Happineſs, of his Goods and good Name, not to

put away ſuch a Wife, except for *Fornication* (and we know not what that means) has neither Reaſon nor Juſtice in it. This is not ſurely *Chriſt's coming into the World to redeem the World*, for it ſeems rather by this Law, as if he came to ſentence the honeſt and ſuffering Part of it to Slavery and Bondage, as long as their Exiſtence here laſts. This is *not to ſend Peace on Earth, but Fire* to be kindled in the Spirit of Man, that ſhall burn up all his Happineſs. To ſentence Perſons to dwell together till Death, whoſe Tempers are as oppoſite as Light and Darkneſs, Heaven and Hell, is to ſentence their Death and Darkneſs as diſconſolate and diſmal as Hell itſelf. Therefore if *Jeſus Chriſt* was what he is ſaid to have been, the *Redeemer of Mankind*, and to do what he is ſaid to have done, *preach Deliverance to the Captives, and ſet at Liberty them that are bruiſed*; this Prohibition of Divorce, this Preachment of Slavery, and breaking the bruiſed Reed, never came from him, and is not his Doctrine.

We are at a Loſs to know what the Sin of *Fornication* means. Mr. JOHN MILTON ſays, it has ſome myſtical Meaning, and therefore conceives it to be that of *ſpiritual Fornication*, which he defines to be, the Wife's Affections being alienated from her Huſband, and ſettled on another Man, not on the Man ſhe has.

She that is thus divorced in Soul, is not united to her Huſband mentally, and ſhould be divorced bodily; for what is more contrary to the original Inſtitution than this? A Diſagreement in Mind, and Diſobedience in Action, much more breaks the marriage Bonds than Adultery. If a Woman proſtitute her Body to her Huſband, when her Soul is eſtranged from him, is this Marriage? Is it not rather intrinſically Whoredom in the worſt Senſe of it, and a greater Evil than *Adultery?* "For no wiſe Man but "would ſooner pardon the Act "of Adultery committed once "and again by a Perſon worth "Pity and Forgiveneſs, than "wear out his Spirits with one "that is of an unſociable, unloving and a miſchievous Diſpotion; who would commit A"dultery too, but for Envy, leaſt "the unhappy Slave ſhould ob"tain his Releaſe. Things that "cauſe an irreconcileable Of"fence, and are not capable of "Amendment, annihilate the "Bands of Marriage, which A"dultery only breaks; for that "once paſt and pardoned, where "it can be pardoned, may be a"mended; but that which na"turally Diſtaſtes, and finds no "Favour in the Eyes of Matri"mony, can never be concealed, "never appeaſed, never inter"mitted, but proves a perpetual "Nullity of Love and Content. "Natural Hatred, whenever it "ariſes, is a greater Evil to Mar"riage than the Accident of A"dultery; a greater Defrauding, "a greater Injuſtice. He that "knows not the Truth of this, "knows not what true Love is. "A diſobedient and diſagreeable "Temper and Behaviour much "more breaks Matrimony than "the Act of Adultery, though "repeated; for this may be done, "and not known, ſo not felt as "a trouble; and being known,

may

" may be repented of, and a-
" mended, and redeemed, with
" more ardent Love and Duty to
" the forgiving Huſband; but
" the Fornication in Affection,
" this Dereliction of Meetneſs
" and Agreeableneſs of Temper
" cannot be unknown, nor a-
" mended if it be natural, nor
" confeſſed or repented of. Be-
" ſides, an Adultereſs may pleaſe
" in all her Behaviour otherwiſe,
" but the Behaviour of the other
" can never pleaſe in all ſhe does.
" She defrauds him of all Con-
" tentment, and Enjoyment; ſo
" that ſhe is leſs a Wife than an
" Adultereſs. Neceſſary and juſt
" Cauſes have neceſſary and juſt
" Conſequences: What Error and
" Diſaſter joined, Reaſon and E-
" quity ſhould disjoin."

I have been informed, that a Gentleman had a Wife who was an Adultereſs, and the Huſband was not unacquainted with her Tranſgreſſions; yet loved her, becauſe ſhe was, as he ſaid, very pretty, and very obliging in every Thing elſe.

" *He that putteth away his Wife,*
" *except for Fornication*, that is,
" if it be this ſpiritual Fornica-
" tion, the Alienation of her
" Affections *cauſes her to commit*
" *Adultery*, breaks off her Af-
" fections to fix them on another
" Man. Carnal Adultery is but
" tranſient Injury compared with
" natural Hatred, which is ſuch
" an unſpeakable Offence and
" Grief, as admits of no Amends,
" no Cure, no Ceaſing, but by
" Divorce; this, like the Divine
" *Fiat*, in one Moment gives
" Life and Harmony to the crude
" and diſcordant Chaos, it huſh-
" es outrageous Tempeſts into
" ſudden Stillneſs and peaceful
" Calm. He that binds toge-
" ther the Diſunions of complain-
" ing Nature in Chains invinci-
" ble, commits the Adultery, not
" he that would ſeparate them."

The utmoſt Rigour of the literal Senſe does not forbid Divorce, but *he that divorces and marries another committeth Adultery*. Here's no Prohibition not to put away a Wife, there's no Adultery in that. The *Eſſenes* were great Admirers of a ſingle Life, ſo that it was no Crime to put away a Wife and and live ſingle; but all the Sin and all the Devil was in marrying, and he that finds the Devil in that State is willing to get rid of it at any Rate, even on Condition of not to marry again; therefore Divorces ought to be freely allowed. It is not much to be wondered at, if a Man in Defence of his Birth be no Friend to Marriage, whoſe Mother that bare him was not married to his Father that begat him. *She that putteth away her Huſband* (ſo called), *and marrieth again, committeth Adultery*; *and he that marrieth her that is put away, committeth Adultery*; but ſuppoſe the Woman is cruelly uſed, or wrongfully divorced, and accepts the Refuge and Protection of an honeſter Man, who would marry her, love her, and uſe her tenderly, how does ſhe commit Adultery, or he that marries her? Is *Adultery* to be committed every Way by the Light as well as the dark Parts, by Humanity as well as Inhumanity, by ſoft Hearts as well as by hard Hearts; Adultery then is every Thing committed by *Adults*. Don't miſtake me, I am far from encouraging Adultery, either Spiritual or Carnal; either in Mr. MILTON's virtuous Senſe,

or Mr. *Rake*'s vicious one; but *Adultery*, in any Senſe, which to me is abſurd and ridiculous, cannot be approved of by my Underſtanding. If the Text be not ſtrictly true in the plain literal Senſe, without the twiſting Art of a crafty Expoſitor, it muſt be underſtood in a diſcretional, moral and parabolical Senſe; but to be diſcretionally underſtood, this with a little *moralizing* the Text, or *mending* it, ſeems conſiſtent with Reaſon, *viz.* He that putteth away his Wife, without any juſt Cauſe, but merely to marry another, committeth Adultery; and the Man that putteth them aſunder, or is the Cauſe of it, that he may marry her that is put away, being thus acceſſary thereto, committeth Adultery. This ſeems reaſonable and therefore right, "The Conditions not be-"ing expreſſed, yet wanting in "Reaſon, are to be underſtood."

No Man's Character, perhaps, has ever ſuffered ſuch Exceſs of Contempt and Honour, as that of *Jeſus Chriſt*; ſome in his Lifetime eſteemed him a *Devil*, and a *Mad-man*; for they ſaid, * *He is a Devil and is mad, why hear ye him?* Other Men, at other Times, have eſteemed him a God, and ſet him in the Throne of the Moſt High. The true Character of ſuch a Perſon, 'tis very hard to know. Had he wrote his Doctrines himſelf, we might have had ſome Rule whereby to judge of them and him; but inſtead of this, we have only bad Collections of ſome Things reported to be ſaid and done by him, of doubtful Original; the Sentences are often without Coherence or Connexion; and for the moſt Part ſo very ambiguous, that his ſincereſt Followers are everlaſtingly puzzled how to underſtand them; though they educate Men in Learning, and keep them in Pay, on Purpoſe to expound thoſe myſterious Writings. And as little efficacious is the Illumination of the *Spirit* to thoſe that think they *ſee* its Light, and *feel* its Operations; therefore the ſincereſt Followers of *Chriſt* are everlaſtingly divided into Sects, and rent into Factions. The more literally abſurd or dark the Matter is, ſo much more are their Underſtandings clouded and confounded about them; and by how much more neceſſary they apprehend the true Underſtanding of them to be, by ſo much the more are they in deſperate earneſt, and Daggers draw about them. I think, the giving Doctrines and Precepts to the common People for their common Information and Conduct, that are out of the Reach of common Senſe, highly reflects on the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of the Giver: But this Diſcourſe ſeems not to be of that Sort, though the more it be examined, the leſs juſt and reaſonable it appears.

His Diſciples ſay unto him, If the Caſe of a Man be ſo with his Wife, it is not good to marry. This, in my Opinion, is true; and ſo (as we read) *Chriſt* acknowledged it to be; for *He ſaith unto them, All Men cannot receive this Saying, ſave they to whom it is given:* But if *all* Men cannot receive this Saying, ſurely it was not given to be received by all Men; and therefore ought never to paſs into a Law for all to obey. The Truth of

* *John* x. 20.

of this Story is incredible, becauſe he had *Women Diſciples*, that he ſhould be ſo much againſt marrying, as to recommend by the following Words *Mutilation* rather, that he whom Nature has not qualified to live in an unmarried State, ſhould qualify himſelf by the Knife, and cut out his Way to the Kingdom of Heaven, which, if this Admonition or Advice leads to, *ſuffers Violence, and the Violent take it by Force.*

The Goodneſs of the Lawgiver does not make the Law good, but rather ſhews how good the Lawgiver is; even reſpecting the great Lawgiver God himſelf, it may be ſaid, Laws are not good becauſe God commands them; but God commands them, becauſe they are good. Otherwiſe Authority, not Goodneſs, are the Motives of his Law. He commands us to regulate our Diſpoſitions for our own Good, but not to deſtroy ourſelves, or mutilate our Members, which would make Religion worthy of Abhorrence, a Deteſtation and Plague to Mankind, and the ſanctified Deſtruction of all human Happineſs.

In *Geneſis*, the Father ſays, *It is not good that Man ſhould be alone.* In *Matthew*, the Son ſeems to ſay, *It is beſt for Man to be alone.* God ſays, *I will make a Help-meet for him.* By his Son's Doctrine, *It is better for a Man to diſmember himſelf than accept of her.*

For there are ſome Eunuchs, which were ſo born from their Mother's Womb; and there are ſome Eunuchs which are made Eunuchs of Men; and there be Eunuchs which have made themſelves Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven's Sake: He that is able to receive it, let him receive it. Theſe Words have been thought by ſome to have a different Meaning, than what they ſeem to have in the Letter; but 'tis probable, the Reaſon why ſome think ſo, is, becauſe the old Maxims ſeems by this to be reviv'd: *Ezek.* xx. 25. *I gave them alſo Statutes that were not good, and Judgments whereby they ſhould not live.* What Doctrine can be more deſtructive of human Happineſs and human Kind, than this? Though if 'tis to be differently underſtood, no Man can be certain what is the certain Meaning of theſe Words. This Doctrine, that *it is good for a Man not to marry*, is ſuch as *all Men cannot receive.* Eunuchs may, elſe why are they named? And in order that Men may receive it, they are recommended to make themſelves *Eunuchs*, if they are not ſo made by Nature, nor by Men; elſe what mean theſe Words that are ſubjoined, *He that is able to receive it, let him receive it?* If the Words have ſome ſpiritual Meaning, how ſhall we know what that Meaning is? The Diſciples never aſked him, they ſeemed to have been credulous and un-enquiring Souls, and to have received almoſt all Things implicitly; for when they knew they could not underſtand what their Maſter ſaid to them, they were *afraid* to aſk him *. So they were like to profit much by *his* teaching, and we by *theirs.*

Suppoſe there are ſome Men born *Eunuchs*, and others ſo made, and cannot commit Adultery; what then, are they ever the better for this Imbecility? And if ſome Men have been Fools enough to make themſelves ſo, for the King-

* *Mark* ix. 32.

Kingdom of Heaven's Sake, are they ever the nearer the Kingdom of Heaven for ſo doing? If they are not, why is the Exhortation annexed, *He that can receive it, let him receive it?* But, alas! the *Women!* What muſt they do, is it proper for them to be ſpaded? The Popiſh Prieſts however, that pretend not to defile themſelves with Women, let them be made Geldings of, that they defile not Women. Surely it is not improper to practiſe this upon them, that thoſe who teach the Way to Heaven may not miſs of it themſelves, for the good of their own Souls, and the Souls of their female Penitents. If this Law was made and put in Execution, it might do well to prevent the Spirit of Popery and Rebellion from exerting itſelf, and to preſerve Proteſtant Liberty among us.

If the *Letter-ſenſe* is unjuſtifiable, I fear it is too palpable for the *Spirit* to hide, nor can I ſee that it will bear a *ſpiritual* Senſe, without making it Matter of Ridicule: Foraſmuch as there is not the Appearance of *ſuch* a Meaning in it; for if *Part* of this Anſwer of *Chriſt* to the Phariſees be *ſpiritual*, why not the *Whole?* If Part be, then Men aſk a natural Queſtion, and receive a ſpiritual Anſwer, which if it be *Hiſtory*, and not all a *Parable*, is abſurd. If *Chriſt*'s Anſwer be myſtical to the Phariſees plain Queſtion; is it not like the Nonſenſe or croſs Purpoſes in *Eraſmus*, where one talks of a *Wedding*, and the other of *Shipwrack?* Alas! for Believers, all their Refuge is in Myſtery, and all their Safety lies in Obſcurity. If theſe Words of *Chriſt* are to be *myſtically* underſtood, be ye in Labour ye *ſpiritual Mothers* of the Church, bring forth and reveal the Myſtery, and defend it by Reaſon, or your ſpiritual *Wiſdom* and *Power* will be meanly thought of. If the *whole be myſterious*, the Letter is no Law; and if it paſs into a Law, it is unjuſt; for if the Letter is to be differently underſtood, if it want explaining or amending, ſo muſt the Law do that is founded upon it.

He that can, or thinks he can, explain the Senſe, or vindicate the *Humanity* of the Expreſſion, ſo as to prove the Doctrine righteous, and the Precept good, let him do it; and all due Regard ſhall be paid to the Reaſons that are given. Let him diſplay his Abilities in explaining or vindicating this ſpiritualizing Precept; and deliver us from the Dilemma it involves us in. If none can be found that can do this; but if he that bravely attempts, ſhamefully fails in his Endeavours; let him *lay his Hand upon his Mouth*, or *his Mouth in the Duſt*, and confeſs that *he cannot order his Speech by Reaſon of Darkneſs*.

For my Part, I own, that the beſt Method I can perceive to juſtify *Jeſus Chriſt*, is, by confeſſing there are Errors in St. *Matthew*'s *Goſpel*, eſpecially ſuch *Parts* of it are faulty, as are indefenſible by plain and honeſt Reaſoning, and are not confirmed by the other Goſpels. To be too ſtiff in this Point, in Defence of the Whole, is to deſtroy the Whole, which according to what we read, is not Goſpel Policy. *Mark* ix. *If thine Hand or Foot offend thee, cut it off; or if thine Eye offend thee, pluck it out; it is better for thee to*

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enter into Life maimed, or halt, or with one Eye; than having two Hands, two Feet, or two Eyes, to be caſt into Hell. As ſuch like Expreſſions in this Place are Sentences independent of what goes before and after; ſo they are capable of being explained in whatever Senſe the *Church* pleaſes. But if the Subject going before and after ſuch Words in St. *Matthew*, are to direct us to their Meaning, it ſeems to point to this Doctrine of Caſtration. *Matth.* v. *ver.* 27 to 32. *Ye have heard that it hath been ſaid by them of old Time, Thou ſhalt not commit Adultery. But I ſay unto you, that whoſoever looketh on a Woman to luſt after her, hath committed Adultery with her already in his Heart. And if thy right Eye offend thee, pluck it out, or Hand, cut it off, and caſt it from thee; for it is profitable for thee, that one of thy Members ſhould periſh, and not that thy whole Body ſhould be caſt into Hell. It hath been ſaid, whoſoever will put away his Wife, let him give her a Bill of Divorcement. But I ſay unto you, whoſoever ſhall put away his Wife, ſaving for the Cauſe of Fornication, cauſeth her to commit Adultery; and whoſoever ſhall marry her that is divorced, committeth Adultery.* Concerning the firſt Part of theſe Words, I think, unleſs a Man look on a *married Woman* to luſt after her, he *does* not commit *Adultery* in his Heart. Beſides, a Man may look on a Woman to luſt after her in an honourable Manner, as the Law allows, or natural Reaſon permits; and he cannot for ſo doing be properly ſaid to *commit Adultery in his Heart.*

Concerning that Part of adviſing to *diſmember the Body*, if it has not an Eye to *Eunuchiſm*, I know not what it means; nor can the *preceding* and *ſubſequent* Words direct us to the Meaning of it. And as to the latter Part of theſe Words concerning *Divorce*, the Exceptions againſt it are neither *ſmall* nor *few*. But my preſent Buſineſs is with the *Amputation* Part, to be executed on the *Parts of Generation*, which naturally Cauſes theſe unhappy Queſtions, or Reflections, permit me the Freedom of mentioning ſome of them.

" Adviſing Men to *make themſelves Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven's Sake*, is as ſcandalous " a Doctrine, and as ill-judged " Sanctity, as ever was preached " to the World. An Atheiſt diſbelieves a God, becauſe he " finds Fault with the Order of " Nature; if an Author of Religion does the ſame, he ſows " the Seeds of Atheiſm. He " grants the Cauſes of Atheiſm " who propoſes an unnatural Remedy to rectify Nature; and " the Conſequence that the World " is not the Production of *Wiſdom*, naturally and neceſſarily " follow."

If this be the Way to *enter into* LIFE, to cut off the *Members*, or Means of it, it is no Wonder that *ſtrait is the Gate, and narrow is the Way, and few there be that find it.* Is the Practice of this Doctrine, *eating the Bread of Life*, which cuts off all Life? Or, does he *give Life to the World*, whoſe Doctrines, if put in Practice, cuts off the Life of the World? Is not this like Men's devouring their Offſpring, after the Example of the old Heathen God *Saturn*? May not his own Queſtion to the

Phariſees

Phariſees be retorted on him, *Is it lawful to ſave Life, or to deſtroy it?* Is not recommending the *Piety* of this Practice, like recommending * the *Wiſdom* of the *unjuſt Steward?* Is there any natural *Piety* or *Wiſdom* in it? If it be ſupernatural, is not ſupernatural Piety, Impiety, or impracticable? And ſupernatural Wiſdom, incomprehenſible or Nonſenſe? Is this a Doctrine or Precept becoming *the Saviour of the World* to teach? Is the Way to *deſtroy* the World, the Way to ſave it? Is not this the moſt *unmanly* Advice that ever was taught Mankind? Which, if all Men practiſed, would end the World as to the human Species? What a *Lover of Mankind* muſt he be thought to be, that teaches to extirpate all human Race? If *Chriſt* ſpoke without Diſſimulation, *not* teaching one Thing, and meaning another; or, if the contrary, what a mean Opinion will Men conceive of him, if this Expreſſion be his? *Some have made themſelves Eunuchs, for the Kingdom of Heaven's Sake: He that can receive it, let him receive it?* For in any Senſe to aſcribe it to *Jeſus Chriſt*, brings diſhonour to his Name. *Women* muſt by this appear to be, or be looked upon, as the greateſt Evils in Nature, and this muſt induce them to hate and abhor *Men:* For to be married to their Saviour, will not ſatisfy their Wants. No Perſon preaching ſuch Morals, can ſo *ſanctify* them, as ſuch Morals can *unſanctify* his Perſon. *Good and Evil*, are founded in the Nature of Man, and Man's Wiſdom finds and applies them by the Fitneſs or Unfitneſs of Things, and regulates his Actions by their Tendency; but *Folly* runs counter to the Courſe of Nature, and directs Men to act contrary to it. If a ſingle Life be ſo holy a Thing, that Men are recommended *for the Kingdom of Heaven's Sake*, to make themſelves *Eunuchs*, rather than marry; why then, if married, ought they not to be divorced for the Kingdom of Heaven's Sake, when for the Sake of all Happineſs on Earth they earneſtly deſire it? Or is it *then* only good, when it is ſo bad, that it cannot be borne, becauſe *then* it is the moſt *mortifying* State? Or, is Divorce abſolutely forbidden (in all Caſes but Fornication) to make the married State the more grievous to be endured, to deter Men from entering into it?

I ſee but one Way to remove theſe Objections, and get over theſe Difficulties, and that Way ſeems natural and eaſy, where it is not barred up by Bigotry and Prejudice againſt natural Reaſon, which informs me, that as St. *Mark* has not mentioned this Expreſſion, who relates the Diſcourſe, it ſtands upon the ſingle Credit of St. *Matthew*, and conſequently the Reaſon for believing it, is rendered the weaker. And as *Jeſus Chriſt* did not write it himſelf, to believe it came not from him, is not diſbelieving him, nor any Thing diſhonourable of him, who tells us in a Parable, *Mat.* xxiii. that *after the Seed of the Word was ſown, the Enemy would ſow Tears among it:* And it ſeems to me that nothing is more apparent, than that many Chriſtians, have from the Beginning of Chriſtianity to this Day, fathered their own

* *Luke* xvi. 8.

ewn wild ſtupid Opinions on *Chriſt*, of which he was not the Author; and that this Expreſſion at leaſt, if not the whole Diſcourſe, is an *Interpolation of the Monks*, who have had the ſecret Management of theſe Books; this Doctrine being fitted to recommend their kind of Life; the Goſpels being kept in a private Manner for more than *three hundred Years*, will allow of this Conjecture. If the Hiſtorians, whoever they were, ſaid that they were Eye or Ear Witneſſes, we have only their own *unknown Evidence*, to ſupport their Teſtimony. But the *Doctrines* and *Precepts* delivered in the Goſpels are better known how Divine they are, by their own Clearneſs, natural Tendency, and Uſefulneſs, than by any Thing that can be ſaid about them. Light and Truth diſplay themſelves.

Of DIVORCE, *and* COHABITING UNMARRIED.

IT makes Miſery, which would be tolerable if curable, to be intolerable if incurable; at leaſt it adds Miſery to Miſery, to think it cannot end but with Life, or at the Pleaſure of another, who inflexibly purſues that Pleaſure, which is my Pain, and I cannot prevent it. This may be the too late Reflections of a Man diſtreſſed by Wedlock: My Wife *Demonia*) (cries he) vindicates her Honour at the Expence of mine, ſhe has a Tongue formed for Deceit, without its being perceived; and by this inſcrutable Art, can blaſt even the Character of an Angel. There appears to be no Hypocriſy in her, becauſe it is ſo natural, that it ſeems to be artleſs. If I grant her not all ſhe requires, ſhe will privately obtain it, both for Pleaſure and Expence; and this ſecret Management is my ſure Ruin. I am determined to oppoſe it Might and Main; now my Houſe is filled with eternal Brawl and Clamour! and through all my Neigbourhood, with whom I had once Reputation and Reſpect, Infamy and Scandal attend me! My dear Name, my ſacred Character is ſacrificed, and I am looked upon to be the guilty Perſon, wherever her Malice finds Admittance, or her Report flies. What ſhall I do? My once joyous Hours are fled, which I found in *Celeſtia*'s Arms; Happineſs is no more; a ſullen Star threatens the Remainder of my wretched Life with Diſtreſs, not to be remedied by Complaint or Action: A diſmal Gloom and melancholy View is all around me: She that ought to be both by Intereſt and Gratitude, my trueſt Comfort in Diſtreſs, and like a good Conſcience my chief Support and Solace in Affliction, is my only Grief and Calamity! O remedileſs State! Whither ſhall I fly? What ſhall I do? If I go, ſhe, like a *malus Genius*, having no Support but from me, will find me out and follow, and ſpread the invenomed Slander of her Lies and Malice beyond my Flight; and whether can I go from the Means of my Subſiſtence? I may as well finiſh at once

once a wretched Life, as attempt to fly the Wretchedneſs of it; the diſmal Conſequences of endeavouring to mend it, ſhew me to be compleatly wretched, and plunged, for ever plunged, as into the Gulph of gloomy *Tartarus*, where falling, I muſt fall for ever! O *Celeſtia*, when I think of thee, I behold Happineſs at an unapproachable Diſtance, like *Dives* in Hell, with an unpaſſable Gulph between me and that, doubly damned with the Loſs of ſenſible Happineſs, and a pungent Senſe of never-ceaſing Pain, but with Life itſelf. Adieu all the Pleaſures that I once embraced in embracing *Celeſtia*, and any Death is welcome. Is this the Reward of my Virtue? O ye cruel Gods, could ye not lengthen out my Tranquility to the End of a ſhort tranſitory Life; or at leaſt abate ſo much of your undeſerved Vengeance, as not to have given me this Torture for miſtaken Pleaſure, which only the Integrity of Life, and Sincerity of my Soul, has made permanent? Much could I ſay, but much rather would I conceal her Shame, who is the Cauſe of my Lamentation: When Nature can no longer bear Reſtraint, ſhe breaks through all Oppoſition. Though ſome Time ſince kind Fate has removed the Painfulneſs of the Sting by a much deſired, but little expected and abſolutely neceſſary Separation, the *third* Time; ſo that *Demonia*, though living yet, her Nature deſperately inimical to mine, offends me not; yet theſe paſt Reflections I remember ſtill, my former *Affliction and Miſery, the Wormwood and the Gall* *.

Theſe melancholy Reflections may be ſuppoſed, made to warn others, as the Criminal with the Gibbet in view preſents the Spectators with his laſt dying Speech. *Fœlix quem faciunt aliena pericula cautum.*

The want of Liberty and Redreſs in juſt Cauſes of matrimonal Complaints, changes the State of Marriage deſigned for a Bleſſing, into a Curſe and Captivity. However holy Matrimony may be called, it is when unhappy much more unholy than Whoredom, being productive of greater Sin and Miſery; becauſe this wretched State, hateful in its Nature, and diſmal in its Conſequences, is like the Laws of the *Medes* and *Perſians*, unalterable but by Death; and not to be abrogated like the Laws of *Moſes*, though *they* are ſaid to have been by God's Appointment, as well as Matrimony. This unmerciful Reſtraint, without Refuge or Redemption, is the tyrannical Effect of religious Superſtition. When once the ſacred Knot is tied, and the matrimonal Rites conſummated, let the married Perſons find themſelves ever ſo much miſtaken in their Diſpoſitions and Conſtitutions of Body and Mind, by Reaſon of any Matters miſunderſtood, or not before known or expected, or in Embrio, and impoſſible to have been foreſeen, though a Cloud of Gloomineſs gathers thick, and Veils all Proſpect of ſucceeding Happineſs, though perpetual Diſcord breaks in like an overflowing Deluge; though malignant Jealouſy infect the Mind, and concealed Leproſy or *lues* the Body of either Party; though

* *Lamentat.* iii. 19.

though Envy poſſeſs the Heart, Venom and Slander the Tongue, diſtorted Rage and Fury the Face; though Drunkenneſs beſot the Head of the Man or Woman, or Extravagance foreboding ſure Ruin be his or her fatal Conduct, or a Multitude of Vexations and Plagues beſides, too dreadful to name, too numerous to recount; though all or ſome of theſe, for all Woes cannot find Place to wound one Perſon, diſorder and torment the married State; tho' nothing remains but an unſpeakable Diſſatisfaction and Deſpair of every ſocial Delight, the Law, the terrible Law of Judgment without Mercy, and without End, has conſigned the married, the marred, the miſerable Wretches over as to a State of Reprobation inſupportable and irredeemable; ſo that the Ideas of Hell eternal, and Vengeance everlaſting, does not make ſuch a ſenſible Impreſſion in human Minds, as the Senſation of this preſent calamitous Condition: For, as that is the greater Pain which is the moſt felt, ſo it is moſt regarded; and makes the Impreſſion ſo large, that it effaces in a great Meaſure, if not entirely, all leſſer Impreſſions; when, let a Man turn which Way he will, he ſees Pain and Vexation, Ruin and Deſtruction tread every Way before him that he can turn; ſo that the Goads of unjuſt Calumny and Reproach torment his Life, with deſpicable Poverty in View, and a Jail, a Halter, or Starving, bid fair to *end* an uncomfortable Life; though terrible be the Way to it, yet the Word *end* tho' with *Life*, is the only Comfort and Conſolation.

Good God! That ever Man or Woman ſhould oblige themſelves by Law to do what is not in their own Power, *viz.* to love, when Reaſon, Nature and Neceſſity oblige them to hate, is ſuch a State of complaiſant Conformity and abject Slavery, as one would think a rational Soul would not be guilty of; but what will not tyrant Cuſtom on one Hand, with a Proſpect of the Joys of Love on the other, oblige a Man to do? However eaſy or tolerable the Chains may appear to be at a diſtant Proſpect, they that have dragged them with an unmerciful Clog, or rather Load of Woe, at the End, (which when felt exceeds all their former Conceptions) find no State to be more diſmal, no Condition more wretched, being doubly curſed like the Damned in Hell, with the Sight of Happineſs at a Diſtance enjoyed by others, and once hoped for by them, which fair Sky being overclouded they are now deprived of Happineſs even in Expectation, ſo that there remains not even *Hope* (that bubble Comfort) left, and in room of the once expected ſocial Enjoyment, they feel laſting Torment and ſubſtantial Woe. No tender Pity is ſhewn, no Bowels of Compaſſion extended to them that have unwarily or unfortunately plunged themſelves into this inextricable Miſery. Matrimony, like Death, is a great Leap in the Dark; only the one renders us ſenſible of our Miſery, the other terminates our Miſery in Inſenſibility; at leaſt in *Body* till the Son of Man comes, *the Day and Hour whereof no Man knows*; nor that it is yet, or ever will be fixed; at leaſt he appears not likely to come till Chriſtianity be gone, for *when*

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the Son of Man comes ſhall he find Faith on the Earth? And if he finds no Faith on Earth, he will not find Chriſtianity there; for this is built on that.

If it be objected, that for Adultery and Impotency the Law has provided a Remedy; this Law is ſo ſevere, and ſo difficult to obtain Juſtice by, that many who even by the Tenor of that Law have a Right to Freedom, cannot find the Means to attain the End, it being attended with exceſſive Charges; and thoſe whoſe Abilities prevent them not, chuſe rather from the Humanity of their Tempers, and the Modeſty of their Diſpoſitions, to ſubmit to an uncomfortable Life in Miſery all their Days, than bring themſelves or their Partners to laſting Shame, and be recorded with Diſgrace, by having the Matter litigated before a public Court, to the Scandal of both Parties. The Law ſhould relieve the Oppreſſed, by Means within the Power of the Oppreſſed to find; and Religion ſhould not contribute to add a Weight to Oppreſſion, and make it durable as Life; but both ſhoud unite their Inſtructions and Authority, to make the Yoke of Life eaſy, and the Burden light.

I ſhall now give you the Subſtance of Mr. JOHN MILTON's Arguments for Divorce, who was as excellent a Reaſoner as a Poet. ——He ſays, that they who bring Liberty to the much-wronged and grieved State of Matrimony, deſerve to be reckoned among the public Benefactors of civil and human Life above the Inventors of Wine and Oil; they ſhall raiſe many helpleſs Chriſtians from the Depth of Sadneſs and Diſtreſs, utterly unfitted as they are to ſerve God or Man; they ſhall ſet free many Daughters of *Iſrael*, not wanting much of her ſad Plight, whom Satan had bound eighteen Years. Man they ſhall reſtore to his juſt Dignity and Prerogative of Nature, preferring the Soul's free Peace before the promiſcuous Draining of a carnal Rage: Marriage from a perilous Hazard and Snare, they ſhall redeem to a more certain Haven and Retirement of happy Society. When the grave and pious Reaſons of this Law of Divorce hath been amply diſcourſed, I doubt not *(ſays he)* but with one gentle Stroking to wipe off ten thouſand Tears out of the Life of Man.

He adds, That maintaining the Reaſonableneſs of Divorce is attempting the Cure of an inveterate Diſeaſe, crept into the beſt Part of human Society, which tends to the redeeming and reſtoring of none, but ſuch as are the Objects of Compaſſion, having in an ill Hour hampered themſelves to the Loſs of all Quiet and Repoſe during Life: That uſeful Life might not be loſt and waſte away under a ſecret Affliction of an unconſcionable Size to human Strength, the Mercy of the *Moſaic* Law was graciouſly exhibited: That this prudent Law of Divorce by *Moſes* is full of moral Equity, agreeable to the Laws of the wiſeſt Men, and moſt civilized Nations; that many bad Men have made bad Uſe of this Law, it is eaſy to believe, yet *Moſes* knew it was better to ſuffer the accidental Evils, which would ariſe from hard-hearted Men by this Precept, than that good Men ſhould loſe their juſt and lawful Privilege

Privilege of Remedy. That if this Overture of Eaſe and Recovery be obſtinately diſliked, what remains but to deplore a hopeleſs, helpleſs Condition! That if the Knot of Matrimony may in no Caſe be diſſolved, except for Adultery, all the Burdens of the Law of *Moſes* are not ſo intolerable: That no Laws can bind againſt the Deſign of its Inſtitution, which was to be an Help-meet for Man, his Solace and Delight.

He Reaſons, That no Law can juſtly engage a blameleſs Creature to its own miſtaken perpetual Sorrow: That the Satisfaction of the Mind in Marriage ſhould be more regarded and provided for, than the ſenſitive pleaſing the Body; for without the former, the latter ſoon becomes unſavoury and contemptible: That though the Liturgy expreſly ſays, We muſt not marry to ſatisfy the fleſhly Appetite, like brute Beaſts that have no Underſtanding; yet the Cannon ſo runs, as if it dreamt of no other Matter than ſuch an Appetite, to be ſatisfied: That thoſe, who in Marriage are diſappointed of the better Part, *i. e.* of agreeable Converſation and Solace, and rather than live in Sadneſs think it better to part, are moved to Divorce by a Motive equal to the beſt of thoſe that marry, and has not the leaſt Grain of Sin in it: That 'tis above the Strength of human Weakneſs to find Satisfaction in the lonely State which they are fallen into by the Means they attempted to ſhun. That the more ſober a Perſon in ſuch Caſe is, the greater Melancholy and Deſpair it brings upon him; therefore it is, that many wedded Perſons are dejected; though they pretend other Cauſes to conceal it, becauſe they know no Remedy. That an unſociable Conſort ſometimes deſtroys the other by Grief: By this Means many a one conſumes away in a joyleſs and diſconſolate Condition; therefore here Charity ſhould interpoſe, and proclaim the moſt deſired and acceptable Freedom. What is Life without the Vigour of it in private or public Enjoyment? Since Life is to be preferred to Marriage, and conſtraint to remain in unſuitable Marriage may ſhorten or endanger Life, the Preſervation of Life demands a Separation.

He urges, That the very being of the Marriage-covenant is unfeigned Love and Peace, without which the Marriage is Hypocriſy. That ſince St. *Paul* ſays, 1 *Cor.* vii. *God has called us to Peace, not to Bondage*, he who cannot love let him divorce. And ſince *Love is the fulfilling of the Law*; where Love is wanting, the Law of the Marriage-covenant cannot be fulfilled. That when the chief End of an Ordinance is fruſtrated for which it is ordained, it is annulled and invalidated, and ceaſes of courſe, unleſs it be otherwiſe renewed and reſtored to its primitive Inſtitution. That an Overſtrictneſs in Diſcipline cauſes it to be broken and brought into Contempt. That Man, by unhappy Marriage, is rendered unfit for the Service of God, and all the Duties of ſocial Life. That the Children of ſuch ill-joined Wedlock may be called *the Children of Wrath*; unhappy Marriage as little conduces to ſanctify them, as if they had been Baſtards.

That thoſe who having diſcern-

ed each other's Diſpoſition, which oft-times cannot be known till after Matrimony, ſhall then find a powerful Reluctance and Recoil of Nature on either Side, blaſting all the Content of mutual Society, are not lawfully married. If all that is fair, all that is poſſible has been tried in vain, to accomodate the matrimonial Diſcords of thoſe, who by ſome falſe Bait have been drawn together, that the ſleeping Enmities of Nature might awake to Agony and Strife later than Prevention could have wiſhed; what Folly is it ſtill to ſtand combating and battering againſt invincible Cauſes and Effects with Evil upon Evil, till either the beſt of our Days be lingred out, or ended with waſting Sorrow. A Perſon may miſtake in fixing Love without Experience, but cannot err, that finds juſt Cauſe to hate by woeful Experience. Hatred is Diviſion, and when natural Hatred (which is of God) ſeparates, let no Man, let no Law force them to live together. No Laws can unite thoſe whom Averſion loaths and avoids. No Laws can oblige to love, whom Nature compels to hate; Affection cannot be forced: A reaſonable and natural Diſlike no Laws can Remedy. That if a diſagreeable Body be no Incitement to Wedlock, a diſagreeable Mind is an Enemy to it. That Nature teaches to divide any Limb from the Body to ſave the reſt, though it be to the Maiming and Deforming of the Whole; and to ſever any Member by Inciſion, that is gangrene, and tends to the mortifying the Body; what if Man and Wife then are one Fleſh, they ought to be ſeparated when Neceſſity requires it.

He proceeds, That the Law was never deſigned to protect Baſeneſs and Injury, yet indiſſolvable Matrimony but by Death does this very Thing, and maintains a Contract in direct Violation to the Deſign of the Law, the Dignity of Man, the Honour of Matrimony, and the inflexible Motives of tender Nature and loving Diſpoſition: A moſt unjuſt Contract maintained by Violence uſurping over Humanity. That if the *Sabbath* was made for Man, not Man for the Sabbath, much more may it be ſaid of *Marriage:* God never ſets the Ordinance above the Man for whom it is ordained. What was ever more made for Man alone, and leſs for God, than *Marriage*; and ſhall we load it with a cruel and ſenſeleſs Bondage utterly againſt the Good of Man?

He ſhews, That Jarring and Diſcord continually grating in harſh Tune together, oft end in Rancor and Spite. That it would be leſs Scandal, to divorce a natural Diſparity, than to link them together inevitably to kindle one another with Hatred; who, if diſſevered, would be Friends in any other Relation. That there is as much Cruelty in forbidding to divorce, as not to marry. Is the Confinement for the Trial of our Patience; but what if it ſubvert our Patience, and Faith too? This is tempting God, by putting a Yoke upon the Neck of Men; which neither former Ages, nor the preſent are able to bear. That many marry or accept of an offer by the Perſuaſion of Friends, which proving a miſtaken State

of

of Confinement and Miſery, both Parties are thereby rendered unhappy: And forced Marriages are ſuch ſavage Inhumanity, that 'tis next to Aſſaſſination; Pity as well as Piety therefore pleads for their Redreſs by Divorce.

That the Apoſtle *Paul* ſays, *What Communion hath Light with Darkneſs, or he that believes with an Infidel?* Matrimony is, or ſhould be a State of the neareſt and deareſt Communion; thoſe then that have no more Communion with each other, than Light and Darkneſs, from whatever Cauſe it be, have broke the Bonds of Matrimony, or they were never in that State of Communion; and if either Way, the Bonds are diſſolved of courſe. If there be ſo little Communion between a Believer and an Infidel, that if the one has a Mind to ſeparate, a Separation is granted: *If the Unbelieving depart, let him depart:* Surely a Believer is to have the ſame Privilege as an Unbeliever, if there be no Communion between them; and if this Liberty be granted where one is an Infidel, *becauſe God has called us to Peace, and a Brother or Siſter is not under Bondage in ſuch a Caſe*; ſuppoſe the Caſe worſe, that the Man is *worſe than an Infidel*, one that *takes no Care to provide for his Family*, is not the Bondage greater? May not the Woman have the Liberty to be delivered from ſo worthleſs a Man? Or, muſt ſhe ever drag the Chain of Slavery and miſerable Servitude? And, inſtead of receiving any Help from him, endure to be ſtarved and robbed, and abuſed, without Remedy or Redreſs during Life? *He that cares not for his own Houſe,* and *ſhe* that does the ſame, who is regardleſs of performing thoſe ſocial Duties which the matrimonial State require, whether he or ſhe goes from it, or ſtays in it, is no Part of it, and as ſuch ought to have no Place in it. Is this Doctrine of paſſive Slavery on one Side, and unmerciful Tyranny on the other, that Perſons ſhould be wedlock't together to their utter Ruin and Undoing, the Doctrine of the Goſpel? Does this bring *Glory to God, Peace on Earth, and Good-will to Men?* Is this *the Liberty in which Chriſt has made us free*, that we are adviſed to *ſtand faſt in?* A Liberty to tyrannize, and a Freedom to Slavery! Can any Thing be ſo ridiculous and contrary to common Senſe?

By this delicate Reaſoning of Mr. MILTON, it is evident, that a Man and Woman who are fitly diſpoſed in harmonious Unity, as if conducted by one Soul to the Helps and Comforts of domeſtic Life, are the proper Subjects only of conjugal State, for theſe, and only theſe can be happy, if their outward Circumſtances permit them to be ſo: But if, upon Experience their Natures are contrary or widely different to each other, they are differently conſtituted, and not made for each other, nor can Men make that to agree which God has made to diſagree; therefore ſuch joining is not of him. When Men and Women therefore are joined together by Law, they ought to be joined lawfully, that is according to Equity; by allowing a *Preciſe*, Diſunion or Divorce, when Evil ariſes, which blaſts all expected Comforts. When the Law does not provide a Remedy for what is

remediable, it is not as it ought to be, adapted to the Exigency of Caſes, or the Fitneſs of Things; it is not ſo well deſigned as it ſhould be; therefore in ſuch Caſes it is not, it cannot be kept, nor is it fit it ſhould, being an unfit Law. If when the Benefit of Divorce to unhappy Marriages is denied, *it is not good for a Man to marry*; then on the contrary, if it be good for a Man to marry, 'tis juſt and right that the Benefit of Divorce ſhould be freely allowed to all unhappy Marriages.

I ſhall now Anſwer all ſuch Queſtions and Objections that I know of, which are made againſt Divorces: Moſt of which rather ſhew the Ignorance of Men how to do right, who are long accuſtomed to do wrong, than any Arguments againſt the Reaſonableneſs and Rectitude of Divorce.

'Tis queried, *What are the proper Cauſes of Divorce?*

Anſw. Whatever makes the married State miſerable; for Marriage was, and ſhould be deſigned for the mutual Happineſs of Man and Woman; if one of them is rendered unhappy by it, the Means fails of the End, the Inſtitution is perverted, and ought to be annulled.

'Tis demanded, *Who ought to have the Power of procuring a Divorce, the Man or the Woman?*

A. The oppreſſed or unhappy Party; for Law and Juſtice conſiſts in relieving the Injured, and ſupporting the Helpleſs. The Perſon that feels the Miſery, is the proper Perſon to ſeek Redreſs.

'Tis aſked, *To whom ſhould they ſeek it? Should we have a Court of Judicature on Purpoſe? Or may married People divorce themſelves whenever they pleaſe, or think themſelves unhappy?*

A. They that think themſelves unhappy are ſo; for the Seat of Happineſs lies in the Senſation of it. There is Liberty for ſingle Perſons to marry when they pleaſe; and ſeeing the Divorce of unhappy Marriage is as neceſſary for the Well-being of Man, as Marriage is; why ſhould not the ſame Freedom be allowed for one as the other?

Obj. *At this Rate, a Man may turn away his Wife, or a Woman may go away from her Huſband, whenever either of them pleaſes; which will only change the Scene of Miſery. And if done by a Courſe of Law, the Trouble and Charge will make it ruinous to their Characters and Fortunes. Therefore 'tis better that no Divorce be allowed.*

A. I am not propoſing a Divorce ſo eaſy as the one, nor ſo difficult as the other; but, as I ſaid before, to part, ought to be as eaſy as to come together; therefore let it be done in the very ſame Manner, and with the ſame Solemnity to make it legal, and give a Sanction to the Act. Let them that are divorced be ſeverely puniſhed if ever they come together again (as the Law of *Moſes* forbids) which will prevent parting for every ſlight Occaſion. Let the Divorce be obtained by being publiſhed three Times in the Pariſh Church, where the Parties live, or by a Licence from the Commons, to be regiſtered at the ſaid Church. Let the Charge be the ſame as marrying. Let raſcally *Fleet* Marriages be prohibited, and let them be declared null and void; and whoever is ſo married,

married, let it be esteemed as Adultery or Whoredom: Then this Shop for clandestine Marriages will be shut up; and People will not be every Day marrying and unmarrying. There cannot be then so much Vice in Matrimony, as there is now. "If Nature's resistless "Sway in Love or Hate be once "compelled, it grows careless of "itself, vicious, useless to Friends; "unserviceable and spiritless to "the Common wealth. This "*Moses* rightly foresaw, and all "Lawgivers that ever knew "Man. When the Reason and "Persuasion of the married "Friends to reconcile them fail, "all Constraint by Law against "Nature renders them but the "more miserable." By the married Persons being published in Church, in order to be divorced, as they are or should be in order to be married; their Friends and Neighbours will be apprised of it, and may endeavour a Reconciliation; by this Means many a Divorce may be prevented.

If a Man deserts his Wife, or a Woman her Husband, has not the Deserter broke the matrimonial Covenant? Why may not the Place by such Desertion be declared vacant, or be esteemed a good Reason for obtaining a Divorce, as well in a married as in a political State? The Desertion leaves the Deserted in a State of Freedom, to take another in the Room of the Deserter. These are Revolution-principles; and the Reasons that justify the one, will also justify the other. 'Tis no more Adultery for the Deserted to marry another, than it was Rebellion in the State to elect another King in the Room of him, by whose Desertion the Throne was wisely declared vacant; tho' it was more vacant from his Unfitness to reign, than from his Absence. The Nation by Experience found *James* the *Second* an unfit Person to be King, therefore made a proper Use of a proper Opportunity to discard him, and Place one more worthy in his Room; so should a Man or a Woman do, who is deserted by, or obliged to, desert a domestic Plague, and abandon Home because of the Tyranny, Oppression and Misery that reigns there. When the Causes and Reasons are alike, the Verdict and Justice should be executed alike. Such like Cases ought to be a sufficient Reason for Divorce, without any officious or impertinent Enquiry, and canvassing private Affairs by a public Court of Justice into the Causes that produce the Resolutions for Divorce, out of a sacred Regard to the Reputation of either or both Parties. Themselves are the best Judges of their own Grievances, and as fit to judge for themselves why they dislike, and so part, as they were to judge for themselves why they liked, and so were joined together: And much more, because the latter is often founded on Fancy; but the former is the Result of Experience. Therefore the Parties concerned are fitter Judges for themselves than a Court of Judicature; because oft-times the Causes are secret: And 'tis not fit that the unaccountable and secret Reasons of Dissatisfaction between Man and Wife should be tossed about and judged by a judicial Court. As the Mysteries of Marriage should be always preserved with

Chaſtity; the Cauſes of private Differences ſhould not be divulged to public Town-talk, to pleaſe every giddy Goſſip or prating Fool, who love to be ever meddling with other People's Affairs that never concern them, and never by ſo doing mend them, but often make them worſe. "The "Differences that ariſe in pri- "vate Life ſhould be cured "and put an End to, but not "publiſhed; they are often ſo "deeply rooted in natural Affec- "tions, as are not within the "Verge of Law to tamper with. "*Paulus Emilius* being aſked, why "he put away his Wife, for no "viſible Reaſon? Said, holding "out his Shoe on his Foot, This "Shoe is a *new* Shoe, and a *neat* "Shoe; and yet none of you "know where it wrings me. In "Caſes wherein a Man's own "Happineſs is concerned, he a- "lone is his own judge, no o- "ther can judge for him; what "he approves or diſapproves, "what is agreeable or diſagreea- "ble, lovely or hateful to his "Nature and Conſtitution. To "deſire to redreſs a Grievance, "is natural; but to be obliged "to expoſe what Good-nature "and Prudence would ſecrete, is "barbarous. Though it may be "juſt to expoſe an Adultereſs, by "public Proceeding againſt her "at Law; yet 'tis a Benefit to "the guilty Wife, to be diſ- "charged without having her "Honour impeached, as many "a Huſband would chuſe rather "to do, by a ſilent Diſmiſſion. "'Ts much better to diſcharge "her thus, than to have her "Faults ſcrutinized and expoſed, "and made the Jeſts of a bawdy "Trial." But the Differences in Divorce about Dowries, Jointures, Eſtates, *&c.* ſhould be determined by Law, or as the contracting Parties ſhall judge meet, or agree to before Marriage. People generally know how to make their own Bargains, the Law is only neceſſary to make them perform the Covenants they enter into, or determine what ſhall be right when none are made, as when a Perſon dies without making his Will. When the Parties are ſo divorced, it is as reaſonable and as neceſſary they ſhould marry again, as it was before, if to them it appear ſo; when a Poſſibility or Proſpect is before them of living happier with other Mates, whoſe Diſpoſitions and Circumſtances are better ſuited to the Temper of each. And the Perſon that is moſt able, ſhould keep the Children after parting, if there are any; or, as they otherwiſe agree about it: For, I think, the Father and Mother have equal Right to the Children of their own begetting. If a Man leaves a Woman as wealthy as he found her; and if ſhe be as healthy, I ſee no juſt Reaſon ſhe has to complain for his parting with her. Since Money gives Power, and the Management of Affairs is an Indication of Wiſdom, and 'tis Power and Wiſdom that govern the World (and 'tis fit it ſhould); therefore that Perſon, be it the Huſband or Wife, that was before Marriage poſſeſſed of the Right of Subſtance, and to whom the Buſineſs after Marriage moſt properly belongs, ſhould have the Right of Divorce, that the Subſtance may be preſerved, and the Family maintained. She that

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brings a Man a Fortune who had none, ſhould have a Power to divorce the Man that ſhe has taken for a Huſband, who is ſpending it as faſt as he can, that ſhe may ſave as much as ſhe can of it. And he or ſhe that is careful of the Family, ſhould have Power to divorce the other Party that takes no care of it, who is therefore an unfit Member of it. Underſtanding and Circumſpection denote Wiſdom, and Wealth gives Power, they that have theſe have the ſupreme Right, and 'tis an ill Government where theſe are divided or diſagree.

From a good Wife and a wiſe Manager of Affairs, none but a Fool or a Madman would deſire to be divorced; and from a Fool or a Madman it can bring no Sorrow for a Woman to be ſeparated. Let them that cannot agree together part, then it may be ſeen on whoſe Side the Fault lies; the World often miſunderſtands and misjudges Things. The Power of Divorce would keep many in tolerable Behaviour, both Men and Women, whoſe Behaviour is now intolerable.

An ingenious Author has theſe three Objections to Divorce *. 1. "What muſt become of the Children upon the Separation of the Parents, muſt they be committed to the Care of a Stepmother, and inſtead of the fond Care and Concern of a Mother feel all the Indifference or Hatred of a Stranger or an Enemy? Theſe Inconveniencies are ſufficiently felt where Nature has made the Divorce by the Doom inevitable to all Mortals: And ſhall we ſeek to multiply theſe Inconveniencies by multiplying Divorces, and putting it in the Power of Parents upon every Caprice to render their Poſterity miſerable?"

A. We often follow vulgar Errors, think and ſpeak as others do without Judgment and without Knowledge. Not every Stepmother proves unnatural, nor every Mother has natural Tenderneſs to her own, and ſome have too much Partiality; which tends as much to the ſpoiling of Children, as too little. A Stepmother cannot be eaſily ſuppoſed an *Enemy* to a Man's Children, if ſhe loves the Man. Every Mother is not fit to bring up a Child, becauſe ſhe is Mother of it; for ſhe may have Fondneſs without Prudence, as Mothers too generally have, but Prudence without Fondneſs is better for the Education of Children, which a Stepmother may have; and if ſhe have not, if ſhe treats them as an *Enemy*, the Father of the Children has the ſame Remedy againſt her, as againſt their Mother, *a Divorce*, which will tend to diſpoſe her to Prudence and Regulation of her Conduct; therefore *Poſterity will* not *be rendered miſerable*, but rather better brought up by this Means; nor are *Inconveniencies multiplied by Divorce*, but very much leſſened, though they cannot by *any* Means in *all* Caſes be abſolutely done away. Jangling and contentious Parents are certainly leſs fit to educate Children, though their natural Offspring, than thoſe that, being freed from the Diſtraction and Confuſion of jarring Tempers, can regulate and govern themſelves, their Affairs and

* Mr. *Hume*, in his Eſſays moral and political.

their Family, with an even Temper of Mind.

Again he argues, 2. "If it be true on the one Hand, that the Heart of Man naturally delights in Liberty, and hates every Thing to which it is confined; 'tis alſo true on the other Hand, that the Heart of Man naturally ſubmits to Neceſſity, and ſoon loſes an Inclination, when there appears an abſolute Impoſſibility of ſatisfying it. Theſe Principles of human Nature you will ſay, are contradictory: But what is Man but a Heap of Contradictions. Tho' 'tis remarkable, that where Principles are after this manner, contrary in their Operation, they do not always deſtroy each other; but the one or the other may predominate on any particular Occaſion, according as Circumſtances are more or leſs favourable to it. For Inſtance, Love is a reſtleſs and impatient Paſſion, full of Caprice and Variations; ariſing from a Feature, from an Air, from nothing, and ſuddenly extinguiſhing after the ſame manner. Such a Paſſion requires Liberty above all Things; and therefore *Eloiſa* had Reaſon, when, in order to preſerve this Paſſion, ſhe refuſed to marry her beloved *Abelard*.

How oft when preſt to Marrige, have I ſaid,
Curſe on all Laws, but thoſe that Love has made:
Love, free as Air, at Sight of human Ties,
Spreads her light Wings, and in a Moment flies.

But *Friendſhip* is a calm and ſedate Affection, conducted by Reaſon and cemented by Habit; ſpringing from long Acquaintance, and mutual Obligations; without Jealouſies or Fears, and without thoſe feveriſh Fits of Heat and Cold, which cauſe ſuch an agreeable Torment in the amorous Paſſion. So ſober an Affection therefore as Friendſhip, rather thrives under Conſtraint, and never riſes to ſuch a Height, as when any ſtrong Intereſt or Neceſſity binds two Perſons together, and gives them ſome common Object of Purſuit. Let us conſider then, whether Love or Friendſhip ſhould moſt predominate in Marriage? And we ſhall ſoon determine, whether Liberty or Conſtraint be moſt favourable to it. The happieſt Marriages to be ſure are found, where Love by long Acquaintance is conſolidated into Friendſhip. Whoever dreams of Raptures and Extaſies beyond the Honey-moon, is a Fool. Even Romances themſelves, with all their Liberty of Fiction, are obliged to drop their Lovers the very Day of their Marriage; and find it eaſier to ſupport the Paſſion for a Dozen of Years under Coldneſs, Diſdain and Difficulties, than a Week under Poſſeſſion and Security. We need not therefore be afraid of drawing the Marriage Knot the cloſeſt poſſible. The Friendſhip betwixt the Perſons, where it is ſolid and ſincere, will rather gain by it; and where it is wavering and uncertain, this is the beſt Expedient for fixing it. How many frivolous Quarrels and Diſguſts are there, which people of common Prudence endeavour to forget, when they lie under the Neceſſity of paſſing their Lives together; but which would ſoon inflame

inflame into the moſt deadly Hatred, were they purſued to the utmoſt under the Proſpect of an eaſy Separation."

A. It *the Heart of Man naturally delights in Liberty*, when the Heart of Man has what it delights in, Man will be beſt pleaſed, and conſequently retain the moſt agreeable Temper of Mind. It ruffles his Temper to take that from him which his Heart naturally delights in; this is the direct Way therefore to make him a bad Huſband, and this is the Reaſon that many Men's Love grow cold to their Wives, as ſoon as they conſider their Loſs of Liberty; that alone changes their Temper, and by this Means they curſe their Fate, which they would otherwiſe bleſs. Love is the freeſt Principle in Nature, and is an Enemy to Confinement; therefore Confinement is an Enemy to Love. It is no Wonder then, that married People are generally miſerable; the Reaſon is plain, Love and Liberty go together. Love cannot be confined, no Laws can fix it; therefore *Eloiſa*'s Virtue is worthy the Example of all Women. She that would confine her Huſband by Law, does not ſeek his Love, but ſomething elſe; ſhe has the Man, and perhaps his Means, but rarely his Love, for that no Laws can bind; Love cannot ſubmit to any ſuch Neceſſity, though Man may; nor does Neceſſity to endure what Man would avoid, alter the Nature or Inclination of Man in Reality, only in Appearance. Suppoſe a Man is in Priſon, and greatly deſires Liberty, but being well informed, that his State is ſuch as it muſt be for Life, and that there's no Reaſon to expect the Remedy he longs for; what then, is a Priſon beſt for him? Or, does he grow pleaſed and delighted with his Confinement? Not at all. But when he finds that he cannot have the only Relief that his Soul wiſhes for, as the only ſuitable and agreeable one, he endeavours to ſeek ſome other palliating Remedy to mollify the Severity of his Confinement, by taking to Drink, or Play, or Converſation, or ſome other Thing, whereby he *ſeems* to be ſometimes delighted *in* his Station, but he is never truly delighted *with* it; and he never loſes the Inclination to Liberty, but to Appearance; but if it may be ſuppoſed, that long Time and Cuſtom has brought Confinement to be more agreeable to him than Freedom, it muſt be, becauſe his Spirits having been ſo really ſubdued by long Bondage, he wants the Power of *enjoying* Liberty if he had it; he is now deſpirited, and unfit for what he was before fit for in the State of Freedom he before ſo earneſtly longed for; ſo Confinement to Wedlock may in Time make a Man ſeem eaſy concerning his State, but he rather ſeems than is ſo, or he becomes careleſs and enervated, not affectionate and vigorous. A Man that has a Wound when he knows it admits no cure, if he has Courage enough to ſupport himſelf under the melancholy Reflection, takes what pleaſure he can in Life as long as it laſts, knowing it will end his Days, and uſes ſome mollifying Ointment or Plaiſter to it; but the Wound is ſtill a Wound, and in his Opinion too; nor can his Cheerfulneſs cure it, or prevent his feeling the Anguiſh, tho' he

he regards it as little as may be, that he may make his Life as happy as it can be, Man is therefore not *a Heap of Contradictions* to himſelf, though Men are to one another, but his Mind moves as regularly as other Things; certain Cauſes have certain Effects therein, and as the Motives are, and his Paſſions are capable of being moved by them, ſo his Thoughts and Actions are always naturally correſpondent. Therefore, tho' Love may ariſe from an Air, or a Fancy, it cannot ariſe from *nothing*; this is to burn without Fire, or be moved without a Motive.

Nor does Friendſhip, or any other Quality or Thing thrive under any Sort of Neceſſity, but ſuch as is agreeable to its own Nature. Conſtraint can neither procure Friendſhip, nor preſerve it. Friendſhip I take to be a ſettled Love, ariſing from a Harmony of Tempers and agreeable Conduct; now what Conſtraint of any foreign Nature can be beneficial to this? Two Perſons living together, ſo as in Time to become intimately acquainted with one another, may be a Means to Friendſhip; but if they know each other, and find no Diſpoſition to it, forcing them to dwell together will not procure it. Perſons already jaded with each other's Converſation, have but little Luſt to Friendſhip by being forced to live together; therefore, even on this Score, Confinement can do no good. Nature chuſes rather to ſeek a Help near at Hand, than far off; and therefore makes the moſt it can of what it has Opportunity of doing, and that is all that's in it; but Confinement to Enjoyment damps the Senſe and Feeling of it, and contracts a Honey-ſun to a Honey-moon. This Way therefore of drawing the Marriage-knot cloſe, ſtrains and often breaks it. Friendſhip where it is ſolid and ſincere, undoubtedly gains by Friends living together, but ſuch never chuſe to part. Where 'tis wavering and uncertain, it may as well go as ſtay, ſince 'tis a Thing indifferent, and being ſo, there's no Damage done, whether it does the one or the other; but a Load of hateful Conſtraint lying upon it, is more likely to cruſh it to Death, than to wedge it into the Parties who feel the Uneaſineſs of the Load that oppreſſes them.

People of *common Prudence* will act as common Prudence directs them in all common Affairs; but prudent or not they muſt be under one common Confinement, and from this is expected to ariſe a common Good! The ſame Argument will as well prove that, in a Kingdom where the Subjects are mades Slaves by ſuperior Power, and impoveriſhed by the Authority of Law, their rebellious Tempers will ſubſide, and they will become eaſy in Thraldom, which otherwiſe would enflame into the moſt deadly Rebellion, were they indulged or under the Proſpect of an eaſy Succeſs: Therefore Slavery is rather to be choſen than Liberty, as the more happy State.

If the common Conſequence of Marriage be only a *Honey-moon*, followed with a Number of *Years under Coldneſs, Diſdain, and Difficulties*, none but Fools would marry, all Perſons of common Prudence would dread the draw-

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ing that Knot cloſe, which ties a Month's Delight to an Age of Diſquietudes and Mourning. Love is doubtleſs a *reſtleſs and impatient Paſſion*, when unſatisfied; but, if ſatisfied, does it prove the ſame alſo? Our Paſſions will be reſtleſs and impatient to diſſolve the Bands of ſuch Love, as the Deſtroyer of its Reſt: For the God of Love labours ſix Days to enjoy his Sabbath on the ſeventh.

Obj. In the third Place (*ſays my Author*) we muſt conſider, that nothing is more dangerous, than to unite two Perſons ſo cloſe in all their Intereſts and Concerns, as Man and Wife, without rendering the Union entire and total. The leaſt Poſſibility of a ſeparate Intereſt muſt be the Source of endleſs Quarrels and Jealouſies. What Dr. *Parnel* calls *the little pilfering Temper of a Wife*, will be doubly ruinous; and the Huſband's Selfiſhneſs, being accompanied with more Power, may be ſtill more dangerous.

A. Where can the Danger be to any one of having Power to relieve one's ſelf from Misfortunes when they come? Whatever Evil may accidentally ariſe from it, I believe it is what every one had rather chuſe, than lie at the Mercy of another's Power, which is what all Mankind dread. As this Scheme is as good for one Party or Sex as the other, ſo none can diſlike it with Prudence, or diſapprove it with Reaſon. If a Man does not conceive it dangerous to himſelf, to diſunite one that is, or rather ought to be cloſely united to his Intereſts, and unite another that he has Reaſon to believe will be ſo, who is to judge for him? Every Man ſhould know his own Intereſt beſt; and what makes it neceſſary for him to part with his Wife. Quarrels and Jealouſies, ſeparate Intereſts and a pilfering Temper are ſome of the Things complained of, that a Divorce, or even the Fear of a Divorce may remedy.

Obj. Should theſe Reaſons againſt voluntary Divorces be eſteemed inſufficient, I hope nobody will pretend to refuſe the Teſtimony of Experience. At the Time that Divorces were moſt frequent among the *Romans*, Marriages were moſt rare; and *Auguſtus* was obliged by penal Laws to force the Men of Faſhion in *Rome* into the married State.

A. The Gentleman anſwers himſelf—"A Circumſtance which "is ſcarce to be found in any o-"ther Age or Nation;"——and therefore not the natural Conſequence of the Liberty of Divorce. But does Experience tell us, that we live happier in a married State, than thoſe have done and do where this Liberty has been and is allowed? Could the Enquiry and Compariſon be made, it would no doubt confirm the Argument in Favour of Liberty.

It remains then, that thoſe who intend to enter into a ſocial State in Expectation of Felicity, ſhould take Care not to plunge themſelves into ſuch a one, as becoming unhappy, is incurable; nor be drawn by bad Cuſtoms into bad Conſequences; nor be deluded into a State of real Sorrow, irremediable, to avoid an imaginary State of Sin: But be aſſured, that honeſt Minds cannot Sin; and what does not injure others, Men have or ought to have nothing to do with. At all Times indeed

indeed a prudential Conduct is neceſſary, and a good Character is valuable; yet a Conformity to ſome Cuſtoms to preſerve the latter, is ſometimes the Occaſion of its being ſacrificed, Experience has told me ſo. Though a good Name is better than Life, in vain we expect to preſerve it in Miſery from Infamy, be it thrown upon us ever ſo undeſervedly. Avoiding the Means of irretrievable Misfortune, is the beſt Means to avoid the Slander of the Multitude, which is generally raſh and wrong.

Since it is confeſſed, that without the Liberty of Divorce, *It is not good for a Man to marry*, tho' it is declared, that *it is not good for a Man to be alone*; then it is good for a Man not to give up the Liberty he naturally has, to ſtand the very unequal Chance of being miſerable without Redemption, to prevent him from committing Adultery. Though Miſery is only ſaid to be the Effect of Sin, yet in this Caſe Men and Women are made miſerable, to prevent them from Sinning, like whipping a Boy to prevent him from robbing an Orchard; which he either has no Diſpoſition of doing, or whipping him prompts him to do. I cannot think it is a Man's Duty to run the Hazard of being miſerable, if he can prevent it; therefore I cannot think it a Man's Duty to bring it on himſelf by Matrimony, or mutilate himſelf to avoid it; yet, in my Opinion, an honeſt and conſtant Nature finds the moſt real and durable Happineſs.

The Society of choſen Mates by mutual Agreement, is preferable to any other State, as natural Honeſty is to that of Honeſty by Conſtraint. Till the Liberty of Divorce is granted by Law, if you are in a State of Life which enables you to bear the Charge of a Family, where's the Crime to take the Woman you love upon ſuch Conditions as you both agree to. If both agree to meet or part, what has the Law to do with it? The Ceremony may join, and often has joined thoſe not fit to be joined, whom neither God nor Nature joins. The Form of Marriage may be, where the Spirit is not; but ſuch are *dead Works*: 'Tis like *the Dead burying their Dead*, or *the Form of Godlineſs without the Power of it, from which* we are commanded to *turn away*. Where the Spirit of Love and Sincerity is, there is truer Marriage without the Form, than the Form without the Spirit; the one are alive to Enjoyment, the other dead to it while they live. But thoſe that Nature joins in conſtant Affection, God joins; and whether with Form or without, no Man ought to ſeparate them. Though theſe are Man and Wife with the Form, or without, yet better without, that no evil Reſtraint be laid on good Nature, but what the Nature of Things make neceſſary, that Man's meddling ſpoil not God's joining: For if God, or Love, forſake thoſe that are gone aſtray from him, and an evil Spirit from the Lord ſeize the Man or Woman, as it did King *Saul*; ſo that their Nature now changed, alters their Condition from Felicity to Infelicity, from Good to Evil, let the Bands of Evil be broken; for living together in Sin, is living in Adultery, or worſe: For now only Force joins them, and ſometimes Luſt, not Love. If

Luſt

Luſt be the only joining Cauſe, they are no more one Fleſh, than a Man and his Harlot is, who are joined by the ſame Cauſe; and when the Cauſe is the ſame, the Conſequence will be the ſame. Therefore theſe ought to part, and ſeek elſewhere in a ſeparate State the Bleſſing that both being together cannot poſſeſs and enjoy.

That Man and Woman were made for the Enjoyment of each other, in ſuitable Circumſtances, the Reaſon and Fitneſs of Things ſenſibly diſcover; but not any Man for any Woman, is alſo plain; becauſe if all were equal, there could be no Choice of one, nor exception againſt another, none could be particularly affected or diſſaffected with one more than with another; and then all muſt be made alike both in Body and Mind: But ſeeing there is infinite Variety, there are infinite Cauſes of Concord and Diſcord in the general Nature of the human Kind and Sex; therefore Love teaches a Man to diſtinguiſh one from many, and to know the Pleaſure of fixing his Affections on a ſingle Object, which he that does on one worthy to be beloved, enjoys in her the Delights of the whole Sex.

Happineſs is found to take up its abode only with thoſe, whoſe agreeable Diſpoſitions, Regularity of Conduct, Conſtancy of Temper, and Ability of Circumſtances are fitly prepared for its Reception and Entertainment; which is expected, but rarely found, in an only Death-diſſolving married State.

The Eſſence of Matrimony lies in the End, *viz.* the good of Society and Care of Poſterity, not in the Means that are ill adapted thereto. 'Tis the good Intent of the Action well conducted to its End that ſanctifies it. Thoſe Laws of Man that generally produce Miſery or Infelicity, are not the Laws of Equity, which ought to be underſtood in every Covenant or Contract, even tho' the Terms are not expreſſed.

If two Perſons are married according to Law, however unequal their Fortunes or Rank in Life were before Marriage, it throws them ſo much on a Level, that all Gratitude ſoon vaniſhes from the Meaner, whoſe Circumſtances are raiſed thereby, though obliged as much as one Perſon can oblige another; for generally the needy Party treats the other with Ingratitude and Indignity for the Favour received, though it was all that one could deſire, or the other give. I cannot conceive that Marriage ought to annul the Laws of Gratitude. Ingratitude on either Side muſt needs be productive of Miſery. But if ever ſo miſerable, the Law affords them no Mercy; 'tis beſt therefore for a Perſon to have the Power in his or her own Hands, by not formally doing what can never be undone. This is as good for the Woman, as the Man. Many a Man ſpends a Woman's Fortune laviſhly and in debauchery too, only becauſe the Law gives him Poſſeſſion, and it is not in the Wife's Power to reſtrain him. I was acquainted with a Youth, a ſeeming Saint, who had no Subſtance, that by the Solicitation of his Relations got the Favour of a young Widow of three thouſand Pounds Fortune, and not long after he was poſſeſſed of her and all

all her Effects, which ſhe generouſly yielded to him, took to Drinking, Gaming and Whoring, till he ſoon brought himſelf and the young Gentlewoman to Poverty; from which ſhe had the good Fortune to be removed by Death. Without the Ceremony, both Parties poſſeſs their own Fortune. A Woman's Property, unleſs ſhe give it away by Marriage, is her own; her Man has a right to ſpend no more of it than ſhe pleaſes; but when married, ſhe muſt ſpend no more than he pleaſes. Suppoſe a Man and Woman, after ſome Time living together, find Reaſon to part, which they may do when the Power is in their own Hands, not having parted with their natural Right by ceremonious Complaiſancy; what is the Woman afterwards worſe than a Widow? If ſhe is in good Circumſtances, ſhe may more eaſily procure for herſelf a Man to her liking; than a poor Widow, and more eaſily too preſerve her Subſtance and her Perſon from Ruin and ill Uſage, than if ſhe gave the Man all ſhe had by ceremonious Condeſcenſion, for fear ſhe ſhould be guilty of living in Adultery. I knew a Man and Women who cohabited together, and were thought to be legally married. The Subſtance with which they traded, was the Woman's, the Man proved extravagant, and of ill Conduct in Buſineſs; ſo that they were in a fair Way to Ruin, when Neceſſity obliged the Woman to declare herſelf unmarried: She turned off her Man, and ſaved the Remainder of her Subſtance, with which ſhe carried on Buſineſs with Succeſs, and ſoon after got another Mate, who is a prudent Man, and whether married or no they live happily together. A Woman's Dependence upon what is her own when it is ſufficient, is better than a Dependence on the precarious Pleaſure of a Man who is a ſanctified Huſband, and for that Reaſon may if he pleaſes be a ſanctified Villain. Many are the Caſes which ſhew the Parties had better cohabit unbound, that the Party aggrieved may be able to redreſs the Condition by a Separation, than ſubmit to a Condition that admits of no Redreſs. Nature teaches us that an unconſcionable Yoke, which cannot be rectified by Law, ſhould be redreſſed by Prevention. If Law forbids the Cancelling of cruel Bonds, Nature directs us not to ſign and ſeal them. Marriage, as it now is, is entering into Obligations to do or bear, what is oft impoſſible to be done or born by the contracting Parties on one Side, and ſometimes on both Sides. However the Neceſſity of Circumſtances may bind, Nature will ſtill be the ſame. *Naturum expellas furca licet, uſque recurret.*

Therefore we are not to take our ſtandard Rule of Conduct from arbitrary Precepts or Practice, that receive their Sanction from Opinion, Authority or Cuſtom; for the moſt rational Part of Mankind are now generally agreed, that the Reaſon and Fitneſs of Things is the fundamental Rule of Right, by which all human Judgment, Law and Conduct ſhould be directed.

'Tis not Wiſdom to barter away Freedom, at leaſt without an equal Compenſation (if an equal can be) and a reaſonable happy Proſpect. Where great Love or great

great Intereſt tempts, let thoſe that pleaſe try their Fortune: As to others, that have no ſuch Temptations to Bondage, in my Opinion, neither the Ceremony, nor the Parſon performing it, combines the Heart or ſanctifies the Action, of thoſe that ſacrifice themſelves at the Altar.

When the Ties of Reputation in a married Woman loſe their Hold, and the Senſe of forbidden Pleaſure drowns the Senſe of Guilt, the Ties of Conſcience have no Force; and in ſuch Caſe, how can a poor Huſband inſulted with Cuckoldom find Redreſs? 'Tis a Crime for him to be jealous; for though the Circumſtances are ſtrong, nothing can juſtify his Jealouſy but the Proof of the Fact, which may more eaſily be a thouſand Times committed, than once proved. And even then, O cruel Bonds! They cannot be ſo eaſily cancelled as made; whereas the Cord ought to be as eaſy to untie, as to tie; and in the ſame Manner, for which an honeſt Man would not grudge the Parſon even double Fees, and alſo adore him as his Redeemer, if he did not his Maſter as ſuch. Then indeed the Church would have the Power of binding and looſing; but becauſe the Parſons only ſhut, and no Man can open, they lie open to the Contempt of all Men; for all Men hate and deſpiſe thoſe that bring them into Miſery, but can do nothing to help them out of it. Now, if the married Part, (for the Gates of Hell cannot confine ſome together, though in the Devil's Hour the Powers of Darkneſs joined them) the Huſband muſt allow a Maintenance or ſomething towards it, to her that he has no longer any Thing to do with, (though I would have him put her away in rather better than worſe Circumſtances he took her in, if poſſible) ſhe don't deſire to diſſolve the marriage Bonds, having the Liberty of ſilting at Pleaſure, and the Satisfaction at the ſame Time of keeping her Cuckold in Confinement, by preventing his Happineſs with a better Mate. I wiſh this be not one Cauſe why Women are generally againſt Divorce, or I know not why they ſhould oppoſe it; for ſet the bad Conſequences of both States, married and unmarried, againſt each other, and thoſe that have not bartered away their Freedom will find the Benefit of it. Certainly 'tis as much the Advantage of a good Woman to be delivered from the Tyranny and ill Uſage of a bad Man, as for a good Man to be freed from the Torments of a bad Woman; unleſs it is becauſe the Female Party are conſcious, that 'tis eaſier for them to captivate Men, than keep them; and if ſo, their charming Qualities are more ſuperficial than real; they pleaſe the Fancy, but will not ſtand the Proof. But Men, ſay they, are fickle and inconſtant Creatures, ever roving and delighted with Novelty; ſuppoſing this, are not Women the ſame? What Pleaſure then can they take in Confinement more than Men? But the Truth is, all are not ſo of *either* Sex, though ſuch are ſome of *both*. So volatile and inconſtant a Humour cannot be bound; conſequently cannot make a good Huſband or Wife; and it is not deſirable to be confined to a bad one.

" If

" If the Divorce be with the " Woman's Conſent, what has " the Law to do with it; if with- " out her Conſent, it is either " *juſt*, and ſo ought to be, or " *unjuſt*, and to be divorced from " an unjuſt Man can be no Inju- " ry: But ſuppoſe it is, and the " Law returns her Back to him " from whom ſhe was *expelled*, or " *intreated* to be gone, and ſhe " lives apart, a *married Widow*; " is not this a miſerable Redreſs? " *But the Man is tired of his old,* " *and wants to have a new Wife.* " If he be tired let him go. It " muſt be a much wiſhed-for " Life, for a Woman to live with " a Huſband that is tired of her! " *The Man's inconſtant and de-* " *lights in Change.* An incon- " ſtant Lover is not worth keep- " ing, much leſs is an unconſtant " Huſband."

Let us look into the Cuſtom of other Countries, Divorce is allowed and practiſed by moſt Nations in the World, except the Chriſtians, and even by ſome of them, particularly thoſe of the *Greek* Church. And generally all others that join one Woman to one Man only, permit an eaſy manner of Divorce to thoſe that prove falſe to their conjugal Duty, and in Caſes of great Offence or Diſtaſte.

As to the indiſſoluable ceremonious Nooſe. " In *Sicily*, after " the Articles of Marriage are " ſigned by the contracting Par- " ties, the Bridegroom may con- " verſe freely with his Bride, and " ſometimes they cohabit many " Years together without the Of- " fice of the Church. Some of " the *Hollanders* have alſo ſeveral " Children before they paſs thro' " thoſe Formalities; and defer " that Affair till near their " Death; and the Children ſo " born are eſteemed and inherit " as *legitimate*. So that (*ſays the* " *Waggiſh Author of Marriage Ce-* " *remonies*) the Benefaction of the " prieſtly Function is not thought " indeſpenſibly neceſſary to the " making ſuch a Commerce not " criminal, tho' in other Places, " they have wheedled Mankind " into ſuch a Belief."

I contend not for the Liberty of Men's having more Wives than one, or of having *Concubines*, which I take to be *Miſtreſſes to wedded Men*, for ſuch they appear in the Scripture to be; but for the Enjoyment of virtuous Love, and for the free Diſſolution of it when it is otherwiſe.

" *When fix'd to one, Love ſafe at*
Anchor rides,
" *And braves the Fury of the Wind*
and Tides;
" *But loſing once that Hold, to the*
wide Ocean borne,
" *It drives away at Will, to every*
Wave a Scorn."

Love is true no longer than it is free; ſhe can only be bound with her own Girdle: No Violence can force, nor Fetters bind her: She forces without Violence, and binds without Fetters.

——" *No Law is made for Love;*
" *Law is to Things which to free*
Choice relate,
" *Love is not in our Choice, but in*
our Fate."

But becauſe all are not bad, 'tis probable theſe Precautions will have but little Effect, Men and Women will run all Hazards in Hopes of Prizes, tho' ten to one are Blanks.

" *But*

" *But yet if ſome are bad, 'tis Wiſdom to beware;*
" *And better ſhun the Bait than ſtruggle in the Snare.*"

Not that a Man is to expect his Wife or Conſort to be a *faultleſs Creature*, ſuch as he fancies *Angels* are; but he ſhould conſider her as human Nature with himſelf; not without ſome Failings; and if they are ſuch as can be borne with, they ought to be borne with. It conduces much to Man's Happineſs, and ſhews a noble Nature, to bear with what is tolerable. If there be an Affection and Endeavour to pleaſe, that good Diſpoſition is Sanctity. As long as one can engage the other's Affections (which it is their mutual Intereſts to do, who live together) both are ſecure and happy; and when that fails to be done in a married State, whatever Security the Woman may imagine her State to be, ſhe is ſecurely miſerable; for two Perſons to be enabled or obliged to live together in Spite of each other, is uncomfortable Living: But this is eaſy to be prevented, by entering into ſuch Contracts only as the Contractors may be able to perform: Conſider, what does Marriage do, but lay an Obligation to keep a Covenant without giving Nature any Ability to do it. 'Tis like the Conſecration of Prieſtcraft, which pretends to put Holineſs into Earth and Stones, that never had any, nor ever can have. It calls Marriage holy, but adds no Holineſs to it; like that of making holy Water for baptizing a Child, which only wets the Infant, but neither makes the Water nor the Child holier than before. It gives not the leaſt Ability to Love or Honeſty, and yet binds to the Practice of both: But Love and Honeſty are the Offspring of Nature and Liberty, not of Art and Confinement; thoſe that have them not in a State of Freedom, will not have them in a State of Bondage, no more than ſuch as Neceſſity produces, the Appearance without the Reality, the dead Carcaſe without the living Soul. Love or Affection are the Soul of Enjoyment, without this, all is unſavoury and unſatisfactory.

Wedlock, which is a Lock indeed, opened to let the unwary in, and in which State the wiſeſt and ſtrongeſt Men find no Opening but in Death to get out, ſeems to be ſo ordained to diſcourage Marriage entirely by thoſe religious phlegmatic Drones, who thought a ſingle Life a ſanctified, and Marriage an unſanctified State, at beſt rather to be tolerated than encouraged, as we read, 1 *Cor.* vii. *It is good for a Man not to touch a Woman; nevertheleſs, to avoid Fornication, let every Man have his own Wife, and every Woman her own Huſband.* It ſeems to me by theſe Words, as if it was good for married Perſons not to touch one another, only to avoid Fornication they were permitted; as if it was an unholy Thing to make Uſe of the Senſe of Feeling: And 'tis likely many Parſons, if they had not a carnal Feeling themſelves, or could ſubdue it more than others, would condemn it ſtill, for they have but little Knowledge of human Nature. The ſame Apoſtolic Batchelor gives his Judgment thus: *To the unmarried and Widows, I ſay, it is good for them if*

they abide even as I: But if they cannot contain, let them marry; for it is better to marry, than to burn. But, like other Men, he was not always in one Mood as to theſe Things. At another Time, he adviſes *the Huſband to give to the Wife all due Benevolence*; but that might be when he was either in a more ſanguine Mood, or after his married Female Diſciples had complained of the want of carnal Love in their believing Huſbands, and *murmured that they* laid *neglected in the* nightly *Adminiſtration.*

A Man and Woman who behave lovingly and honeſtly to each other, can never accuſe themſelves of either Fornication or Adultery; it is juſt and innocent in the Nature of the Thing to any reaſonable Conſcience, they may very well anſwer it to the ſpiritual Court within their own pure and uncorrupted Minds and Judgments; but if their Conſcience be governed and directed by another ſpiritual Court, whoſe partial Judgment is directed by Intereſt, they will judge it to be as they are directed to judge, which will certainly be what ſuits the Intereſt of ſuch Court to make it. But if Honeſty of Heart and pure Affection be the Motive to good Actions, and our Rule to judge of them, then all natural Impulſes conducted by ſuch Motives, are pure, good, right, and fit to be done; nor is there any Evil in ſuch Actions, whatever may be the unforeſeen Conſequence, or the cenſorious Judgment of ſtupid Ignorance and perverſe Prejudice; and who can help People's wrong Notions of Things. They that don't go to Church are deemed Schiſmatics, and thoſe that don't believe as the Church believes are called Heretics; but what are any of them the worſe for that, ſince Honeſty is not limited to Orthodoxy. True Courage, which a right Conſcience helps to procure, is requiſite to daſh Impudence. How in the Nature of Things can that Man and Woman be Adulterers, that are conſtant and honeſt to themſelves? Or how can their Children be Baſtards, who are the Offspring of a faithful Couple? There are many married Whores and Whoremongers, and many Baſtards are born in Wedlock.

If the End of Marriage be anſwered, *viz.* the Benefit of Society and Poſterity, where's the Piety in contending for a Superſtitious Ceremony? And where's the Virtue of it, when a Sham or ſcoundrel Parſon at the *Fleet* ſhall ſo bind the holy Nooſe, that the greateſt Unholineſs cannot diſſolve it. If this agree with national Piety, what Sort of Piety is that which ſuch impious Wretches have performed to the Ruin of thouſands, without any Redreſs? Certainly the Apoſtles ſaid Right, *If the Caſe be thus between a Man and his Wife, it is not good for a Man to marry.* But the Caſe was well enough, before it was made bad by adulterous Sentiments of Divorce.

I am perſuaded, if the Liberty of Divorces were granted by Act of Parliament at reaſonable Rates, Fees or Fines diſcreetly managed and well applied, it might in Time bring in ſufficient to diſcharge the Debts of the Nation: But as the Government has given to Prieſts the Benefits of Marriage,

riage, and permitted them to marry, without which all married People would be in an unſanctified State: So I willingly acquieſce, if the ſuperior Powers pleaſe to give Parſons the Benefits of Divorces, not doubting, but then they would plead as heartily for that Liberty as I have done.

SECT. III.

Of PUBLIC WHORING.

GOOD and EVIL are known by the *Nature* and *Conſequence* of Actions; in the diſtinguiſhing which, we are to uſe Reaſon in governing our Appetites, Affections and Paſſions; not in mortifying or crucifying them (as the Notion of ſome is) but conducting them in a proper Channel. *Appetites*, *Affections*, and *Paſſions* are the Springs of Life, to exterminate them is to deſtroy all the Good that Life can be productive of, and even Life itſelf. To *regulate* theſe, and to direct Men ſo to act, as to prevent bad Conſequences to themſelves, and others, as much as can poſſibly be avoided, is as much as is neceſſary. To be able to do this, 'tis proper to conſider and define, what moral Good and Evil is: This can be determined only by a Judgment formed on the Nature of Things, not directed by arbitrary Laws or precarious Accidents.

Human Good and Evil, reſpects human Creatures only, and depend on their *Circumſtances*. No moral Law is abſolutely Good or Evil in all Variety of Caſes; for as the Caſe or Circumſtance varies, ſo the Good or Evil of the Action will vary with it. We may not *kill*, to do it unlawfully is *Murder*; but to kill a Criminal, or an Enemy in War, is *Lawful*. 'Tis not a Crime to eat and drink, unleſs we do it to Exceſs, and ſo hurt ourſelves, or devour the Property of others, and ſo do Hurt to others. Moral Good and Evil being limited to the Nature of Man, it muſt needs be, that Actions which are injurious to none of the human Species, and neceſſary to be done, becauſe the Nature of Man requires it, are not evil Actions. The *Action* is not evil, which has not evil Conſequences, whatever the *Evil* was that occaſioned it. *By their Fruits you ſhall know them.* What does not injure Man, cannot diſpleaſe God: For God governs Man by Laws, for the Good of Man: God himſelf is not benefited or injured by any Thing that is in the Power of Man to do; becauſe from Man, God receives nothing: From God, Man receives all Things.

Natural Appetites that excite to the *Propagation* and *Preſervation* of human Life, are not in their Nature *evil* to Man. *Copulation* is not an *Evil* in its Nature, but in ſuch Circumſtances as are attended with Inconvenience, and

ſome natural bad Conſequences in Body or Mind, as in theſe three Particulars:

1. When there is a *natural Unfitneſs in the bodily Parts*, Nature forbids to join together Things unfit to be joined; for it is communicating Pain and Injury, inſtead of Pleaſure and Gratification. Yet Perſons may be ſo unnaturally bound together, by the *ſacred Rites*, and ſo diſagreeably fitted for the Enjoyment of each other.

2. When there is a *natural Reluctance* of one Party to comply with the Diſpoſition of the other, 'tis a Prohibition of Nature. Whatever is done by one, contrary to the Will of the other, or not without *full Conſent* of both, mars the Felicity of Enjoyment; and is attended with Sorrow and Grief on one Side, as well as Compunction and Regret on the other, in a Temper poſſeſſed of *Humanity*. Every Thing contrary to true Harmony is a Violation of LOVE, and not its Offspring. *Rapes* are of the moſt brutal Nature, and deſerve ſevereſt Puniſhment. To force a Virgin, ſhould be eſteemed a Crime equal to robbing a Houſe. Forced Marriages againſt the good Will of both Parties, is diſagreeable; it is an Evil that produces laſting Sorrow and Unhappineſs; the yoking together adverſe Natures, Nature forbids. There ſhould be a Fitneſs in Body and Mind to Action, to make it fit and agreeable.

3. By diſhonourable Solicitation, fraudulent Inſinuation, and falſe Promiſes, to debauch a Mind to an Action, the natural Conſequence of which is Injury and Repentance, is alſo criminal. To deflour a Virgin under Pretence of Marriage, and abandon her, is a Fraud and Knavery; and is naturally productive of ill Effects. The intrinſic Value of a Maidenhead, though nothing in itſelf, is to be eſteemed according to its current Value in the Eſtimation of Huſbands, and the Conſequence of its Loſs to the young Woman's future Felicity, and perhaps not hers alone. This makes it evil, enhances the Crime, and ſhews the Iniquity of the Fraud; which might be leſs fatal, if Divorces were allowed: For it would not then be productive of ſuch evil Conſequences. To tempt a Virgin, or a virtuous Matron, to tranſgreſs the Laws of Chaſtity and Conſtancy, is not leſs a Crime than defrauding one of his Property by artful and deceitful Inſinuations; as it tends to ſpoil the Reputation and Fortune of the *one* in Marriage, or if ſhe be afterwards married, may render her leſs valued and beloved by her Huſband; and to diſengage the Affections of the *other* from her loving Huſband: By debauching a chaſte Mind, ſhe is rendered leſs virtuous, and with her Huſband made leſs happy than before. Beſides, 'tis a Robbery to the Huſband in the higheſt Degree, to deprive him of what he moſtly values, *viz.* the tender Affections of his Wife: When that is the Caſe, it is a Loſs that can never be repaired. Sometimes to gratify one Man's Pleaſure, Charge is brought on another, which the Actor would be very much offended, was he in the Huſband's Caſe, to be ſo uſed. This is doing by another, as a Man

a Man would not willingly be done by; and is therefore a moral Evil.

Theſe Things are evil, becauſe of the Injury committed; but the Caſe is different where none are injured, and both Parties are free, and pleaſed with each other's Actions, and are under no Engagements of Reſtraint than their own Nature and common Prudence direct. I ſee no Reaſon, why Perſons that are at their own Diſpoſal have not as much natural Right to diſpoſe of their own Perſons according to their own Pleaſure, as of their Subſtance, Income, or Eſtate, if the one be as much their Property as the other: If it be not ſo, then People dare not for their Soul's Sake ſay their Bodies are their own; but if it be ſo, it is not evident, why they ought to be puniſhed for diſpoſing of themſelves as they pleaſe, eſpecially when Matrimony, as it now is, is often worſe, or of more fatal Conſequence; nor will it ever be eſteemed honourable by thoſe that are unhappy, while the Means of Happineſs are withheld.

'Tis well known, that in the ſatisfying every natural Deſire of Man, eſpecially thoſe that give the moſt Delight, Nature needs a Bridle not a Spur; becauſe more are injured by too great Freedom than Reſtraint: Therefore Prudence ſteers the middle Way, and therefore Reaſon is given to regulate our Deſires; yet the moderate Gratification of what Nature makes neceſſary can be no Crime, when the Property of none is invaded, and none are injured by it. 'Tis only the immoderate Uſe of Pleaſure, or ſeeking it to the Detriment of others, that makes it criminal; therefore this can be no Reaſon to uſe a *Muzzle* inſtead of a *Bridle*, nor to make thoſe Actions criminal that are Incitements of innocent Nature, which ſhe alone ripens Man for, and conſtrains his Will to deſire; and he cannot help deſiring what ſhe fits him to enjoy, and which not Nature but Cuſtom makes criminal: For how can they be culpable of committing Evil to others, who neither do nor intend any? And Man or Woman cannot will Evil to themſelves; for Evil conſiſts in Grief and Pain. The Gratification of every Senſe contributes to the Pleaſure of Life or Man's Well-being, and every Senſe was given to Man for that End, to be enjoyed within the Bounds of Reaſon, in proper Circumſtances; and thoſe Circumſtances are proper and reaſonable, that are by joint Conſent, and hurtful to none. Pleaſures enjoyed and communicated prudently within natural and reaſonable Bounds, and with neceſſary Regard to Health and Subſtance, ſo as not to be attended with the Apprehenſion of Guilt, or the Fear of After-pain, are enjoyed with Satisfaction. What makes Pleaſure the greater to an honeſt Mind, is to be ſatisfied with Reaſon how it may be enjoyed, ſo as not to diſturb the Mind's Felicity by Self-accuſation or After-reflections: For the Pleaſures of Senſe are marred, if the Fruition is not with a full Satisfaction of Mind, which a good Underſtanding and a prudent Conduct are always neceſſary to promote.

As to eat to ſatisfy Hunger, makes not the Action evil; for

were it not for this, Men would have no Deſire to eat, nor find Pleaſure in eating, conſequently could not eat at all; ſo the Gratification of carnal Luſt to the Injury of none, is no Evil; nor is the Luſt or Deſire itſelf, for were it not for that, (to which Nature has joined *Love* to the Object to inforce it) all Procreation and the Pleaſures and Virtues of a ſocial Life and Family Relations would be at an End: Therefore, barely *to look on a Woman to Luſt after her*, without ſome other explanatory Words, *is not committing Adultery in Heart*: 'Tis not an Evil, becauſe unavoidable, and ſometimes neceſſary. If carnal Luſt be in itſelf an evil Motive, it muſt be ſo at all Times, or in all Caſes, and conſequently is ſo in a married State; for in this Caſe Marriage don't change the Motive to the Action; if it did, it would either be not done at all, or be very ill done. It is not Evil to gratify the natural Luſts of Senſe, by which Life and Being are ſupported and propagated: but to do it to the Prejudice of others. Where neither Party injure each other, but a Man's natural Appetite is ſatisfied by the Uſe of an obliging Courtezan, if he is under no legal Ties to another that ought in Reaſon to reſtrain him, but Pleaſure is mutually given and received, I cannot ſee any Evil to be in the Action more than in the Deſire; which Deſires being infuſed by Nature for the good of Man, vigorous in the beſt, and unavoidable in all in whom they are, which Man's Will or Wiſdom cannot prevent, are not evil; though through the Miſt of falſe Divinity they be made to appear, and be accounted ſo. 'Tis the forbidding it, makes it criminal, or rather to be eſteemed as ſuch: For this Deſire does not ariſe from a vicious and corrupted Mind, but is the genuine Offſpring of pure Nature in the pureſt Minds. The Deſire of mutual Enjoyment is natural to Maturity, Health, and an uncorrupted and vigorous Conſtitution. Are Men to crucify theſe common Diſpoſitions given them of God as Temptations to Evil, which invite them to participate of the Satisfaction their Nature requires, and Circumſtances afford; which are the moſt diſtant from ill Nature of any Deſire in Man, when guarded from all injurious Intentions?

He that cannot refrain, let him marry, is the Precept: But there are many Precepts from the ſame Authority, that have wanted much Amendment in Practice. When Precepts of Virtue are ſtrained too high, they are either impracticable, or become vicious in their Conſequences. All Men who cannot refrain, are not proper Subjects of Matrimony. If ſuch marry as are unable to provide for their Offſpring, they make themſelves and their Offſpring miſerable. To ſay another may refrain becauſe I can, or think I can, is to meaſure every Man's Nature by my own, or by my own Imaginations; which is certainly the Effect of Ignorance, and has been the Cauſe of impracticable Laws and ſevereſt Cenſures; not leſs ſtupid than to ſuppoſe all Mankind can believe one and the ſame inevident Propoſition that is propoſed to them. The Natures of Men are ſo very different, that what one Man can

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do, another cannot; and he muſt be very ignorant of human Nature, who does not know that every different Man has a different Ability. The not duly regarding this, occaſions erroneous Opinions of Good and Evil, bad Laws and Government. If every Man and Woman cannot refrain who are not in proper Circumſtances of marrying, then ſome Indulgence for theſe ſhould be found out and granted.

If Perſons in a Condition of Life incapable to bring up their Offſpring, were aſſiſted by the Public in bringing them up, this Objection would be removed. When Inability in Wealth is the only unqualifying Circumſtance, to help and aſſiſt their Wants by public Charity, is a public Good; 'tis giving proper Encouragement, and doing juſt Honour to Matrimony. To ſuccour the Children of unfortunate Parents, when born in or out of Wedlock, is certainly a public Good to Children, as well as to their Parents, who are afraid or aſhamed to own them. Since no Age of the World could prevent an unfortunate Offspring, the beſt Thing that appears at preſent neceſſary to remedy this, is to give ſuch Encouragement to the Foundling Hoſpital, as may enable them to bring up the Infants ſent thither for the Service of the Public, which may be a Means to ſave the Lives of thouſands; Or, Overſeers of the poor ſhould be obliged to take Care of all ſuch Children as are ſent them, without enquiring after or puniſhing the Mothers of them for not being able to maintain them. This Sort of Charity ſhould be ſupported by the Batchelors and Widowers of *Great-Britain* who have no Children, that thoſe who do not marry for fear of Charges, may have the leſs Objection againſt it on that Account. This is taking a neceſſary Care of Poſterity, and rendering them uſeful to Society.

They that cannot contain, are directed to marry, becauſe *'tis better to marry than to burn.* But what if by their Nature and Circumſtances, it is not proper for them to marry, and yet they cannot help burning; nor, if married will the Burning ceaſe; for though ſome can contain themſelves without marrying, others cannot with. Thoſe that marry ſhould have Diſpoſitions peculiarly fitted for that State, theſe make it honourable indeed; thoſe that have not, make it diſhonourable and unhappy. As Perſons are differently diſpoſed by Nature, which can never be eradicated, they will purſue different Ways, and different Sorts of Happineſs. 'Tis contrary to Nature and the Deſign of Providence, that all ſhould be regulated by one Method, they can no more be brought to one Practice, than they can all embrace the ſame Articles of Faith. Certain it is, that there are ſome Diſpoſitions which cannot refrain, and as certain I think it is, that there are ſome that ought not to marry; not only thoſe who are not in Circumſtances of taking Care of a Family, but alſo ſuch whoſe Natures are not ſuited to that State: As 1ſt, The Intemperate, whoſe libidinous Nature one to one is not ſufficient to ſatisfy; nor 2dly, Thoſe turbulent Tempers who can neither long enjoy Peace themſelves,

nor ſuffer Peace to be long enjoyed where they are. 3dly, Perſons of unſtable Temper are not fit to be married; the Inconſtant being never pleaſed with any Thing long, cannot be long happy, nor make their Mates ſo. 4thly, And Perſons without natural Affection are not proper Subjects of Matrimony; where this is wanting, the natural Duties incumbent on married Folk to perform towards each other, can not be diſcharged. Such Tempers are the Cauſe of much Infelicity in Wedlock. If an Office be required of Perſons unqualified for the Performance of it, 'tis an unfit Undertaking; ſuch ought either not to be put into that Office, or being in it, to be diſcharged from it, or at Liberty to leave it. Therefore that ſome are not fitly qualified to marry, yet by Nature are ripe for Enjoyment, needs, I ſuppoſe, no further Proof. Tho' the Reſtraining this Luſt is not deſtructive of our own Exiſtence, as not eating and drinking is; yet becauſe it is deſtructive of the Exiſtence of Poſterity, the Deſire of ſatisfying the Inclination of the former is not leſs ſtrong than the Deſire of ſatisfying that of the latter, in moſt Conſtitutions. So very ſtimulating is the Itch of Coition, that Men and Women run all Hazards to enjoy what Nature vigorouſly prompts them to; ſo that neither the Fears of Shame, nor Diſgrace, Penance, Puniſhment, Fines, Poverty nor Death, nor yet the Belief of eternal Damnation, can prevent even the Righteous, as well as the Profane, from this pleaſing Tranſgreſſion. So that no Laws nor Combinations of Men for reforming others (made mad by abſurd Notions of Religion) have ever been able to put a Stop to it; becauſe it has its Root in the Strength and Perfection of the human Conſtitution and animal Life; therefore 'tis impoſſible to root it out, or to prevent thoſe Effects which have their Cauſe in Nature.

Many Actions are not evil in the Nature of Things, which are evil by the Laws of every Country; and the Reaſon is, becauſe no Country makes the Nature of Things the univerſal Standard of Law, as they ought to do; and they do it not, becauſe it ſuits the Intereſts of thoſe that have an Influence in making thoſe Laws, to act contrary to Nature's Laws or the Dictates of pure Nature: Or elſe it is owing to the Ignorance of the Legiſlators, in not rightly underſtanding the Exigency of Things and human Nature. When this is the Caſe, and injurious Laws are eſtabliſhed, the Impoſition or Iniquity becomes faſhionable, and gives it a Sanction; and then he that breaks ſuch arbitrary Laws, ſhall be deemed as great a Sinner, as if he perverts the eternal Laws of Right and Wrong, tho' it be in Caſes where there is no Sin, and which gives Offence to none, but thoſe whoſe Bigotry, Ignorance or hypocritical Virtue gives Offence to human Nature; enacting Laws, which they cannot keep if they would, and which therefore they never do when a ſecret agreeable Temptation and private Opportunity offers. Nay, for fear of having their Actions made public, they debauch the Virtuous. Thus, Tinker-like, by endeavouring to ſtop the Leakineſs of human Nature in one Reſpect,

ſpect, they make it greater in another, and render it more incurable. To ſave their own Reputations, they lay the Foundation of private Debauchery: For concealing Nature does not alter it.

If any object, that the Indulgence of public Whoring will tend to the corrupting young Men, this I think has little of Argument in it; for when their Bodies are ripe for Action, their Minds are, and if Nature has not vent one Way it will find it by another. The moſt modeſt Youths that debar themſelves of the natural Means of diſcharging the Redundancy which Nature forms, find other Means of doing it, called in theſe Days *Onaniſm*; a Practice not ſo natural, healthy or laudable, as that of ſpending their Rage on thoſe who being free from Diſtemper are ready prepared to receive them, and to cool their Courage. The Indulgence therefore of public Whoring well regulated, will be found to be a public Benefit, for when it is ſuppreſſed the private will prevail, and for that Reaſon private Whores will be moſt againſt the Permiſſion of it; therefore all Means taken by Severities totally to prevent it, makes it worſe. Whan a Woman is once become a public Whore, ſhe has no Expectation of getting a Huſband, and yet has the ſame Deſires towards Man as honeſt Women that have Huſbands; and woe to the Man that marries a private Whore. What Way can you puniſh Harlots that can reform them? If the Diſpoſition be in Nature, there is no Way but depriving them of natural Life. This will be as impolitic as drowning the World was for it heretofore (ſuppoſed by the Judgment of ſacred Writers to be done for that Cauſe;) for as ſoon as the Earth was delivered of its Weight of Water, Mankind grew, as ſoon as they could grow, as bad as before. Suppoſe all the naughty People in this Iſland were hanged or tranſported out of it this Day, by To-morrow Morning there would be more; they would every Day ſprout like Muſhrooms, while there was Health and Strength and human Nature remaining. If it was poſſible it could come to a ſtop here, People from other Countries would come over; and thoſe few honeſt People that remained, having no bold ſpirited Rogues to defend them, would be deſtroyed for their Sobriety, as they had deſtroyed others for their Wantonneſs; for God no more protects Fools than Sinners. Carnal Luſt is an Itch in young Blood abounding with Health and Vigour, which no Remedies but ſuch as Sickneſs, old Age and Death can effectually Cure. Marriage is preſcribed as a Remedy, but 'tis often but a palliative one, and the Cure is frequently worſe than the Diſeaſe; therefore young Men are afraid to apply it, and married People when not pleaſed with their Mates apply it in vain. Thoſe that are ſingle dread the Remedy, and thoſe that are married for the moſt Part hate it; becauſe 'tis a Remedy that allows of no Remedy, it cauſes more Miſchief than it cures, and will do ſo as long as it is, *for better for worſe till Death parts.* This Sort of marrying therefore gives Cauſe to Whoring; for who had not rather do an Evil they can repent of

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and mend, than do an Evil they can never mend though they conſtantly repent of it? The beſt Cure for Whoring, is to grant ſome reaſonable Liberty, that People upon trying and diſliking may part as eaſily as they came together. Though this may not perhaps abſolutely and effectually prevent Whoring, yet it will be found to do it (I believe) the moſt effectually it can be done; then there might be more Reaſon to put penal Laws in Execution againſt it. And there would be good Reaſon to do it, if proper Huſbands could be found for all the wanton Women, and not only Wives for poor Fellows that want them, but their Families taken Care of who are ſcarce able to take Care of themſelves: Or, if Parſons by preaching could change and reſtrain the Exuberance of Man's Nature. Until theſe Things are done, there is no proper Cure for the Malady complained of. But while God gives to Men and Women ſuch ſtrong and vigorous Inclinations as they have, they will incline as they do one towards another. For as the Powers of Nature act mechanically on inanimate Bodies, ſo do the Powers of human Nature (the Paſſions, Appetites or Diſpoſitions) actuate the human Body, as Opportunities or external Circumſtances permit or invite.

All Actions ſhould be regulated by Reaſon in ſuch Sort as the Nature of Actions require. Give to natural Uſe what Nature requires: What is God or Man benefited by any unnatural Reſtraint? Or, how injured, when no Injury is done to any one? But, methinks, I hear it objected, *Shall I take the Members of* Chriſt, *and make them the Members of an Harlot? God forbid!* But ſometimes Harlots are the Members of *Chriſt*; for he told the Phariſees, that ſuch ſhould *go into the Kingdom of Heaven before them*, for they believed in him, *Matth.* xxi. 31, 32. And as many a Harlot therefore may be a Member of *Chriſt*, who was a Friend to Publicans and Sinners, in this Caſe 'tis only joining one Member of *Chriſt* to another, and they'll be equally ſanctified. But if *he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit*, 1 *Cor.* vi. 17. then he that is joined to him, is joined by a ſpiritual Member; and if *he that is joined to a Harlot is one Fleſh*, as the ſame Apoſtle intimates, that joining is by a carnal Member, and ſo not by the ſame Member by which he is joined to *Chriſt*; conſequently he does not take the Members of *Chriſt*, and make them the Members of an Harlot; but as *Chriſt* admoniſhed, *Give to* Cæſar *the Things that are* Cæſar's, *and to God the Things that are God's*; ſo he gives to the Spirit the Things that are ſpiritual, and to the Fleſh the Things that are fleſhly. To each its proper Member. St. *Paul* ſeems to give the Devil's Things to the Devil, 1 *Cor.* v. when he orders them to give the *Fleſh* of the inceſtuous Perſon to *Satan*, *that his Soul might be ſaved*; meaning perhaps, Let him ſow his wild Oats, that his extravagant Actions may bring him to Repentance; perhaps, 'tis no great Matter to us what he meant, but in particular it ſeems to be giving to Satan the Things that are Satan's. It appears not to me to be any Thing unna-

unnatural, for a Lover of *the Son of Man* to be a Lover of *Man*.

The firſt Council of the Apoſtles ordered the Gentile Chriſtians *to abſtain from eating Blood, and Things ſtrangled, from Things offered to Idols, and from Fornication.* Theſe were injoined as ceremonious Laws, and as ſuch the breaking any one of them is only breaking through a Ceremony. If all are upon an equal Foot, then Fornication is no more criminal than eating a ſtrangled Pullet or black Pudding. The Difference ſeems only to be as the Conſequences make it: For St. *Paul* eſteems eating *Things offered to Idols* as no Crime in itſelf, but in the Conſequence that may ariſe from it by giving Offence to a weak Brother. So judge of other Things then forbidden. There are Actions lawful in the Nature of Things, that are not expedient.

He that cannot refrain, let him marry, is not a fit Precept to thoſe that are not in a Condition to provide for a Family; or are ſo far from being in a Capacity to do it, that they are little able to take Care of themſelves, unleſs public Charity would take care of their Children. If this was done, many would be brought up that now periſh, and would in a great manner prevent Whoring. I think it is no Man's Duty to enter into any Contract, that he is not capable of Performing. Marriage or Cohabitation is a State that requires a Settlement. He therefore that is not ſettled in the World, nor in a Condition of ſettling himſelf, and marries or cohabits as a Huſband with a Woman, or ventures upon the getting Children to maintain, does not well conſult the Happineſs of himſelf, his Partner, nor of Poſterity, which it is ſo much the Duty of all Men to take Care of, that he who does not or cannot do, muſt be ſtung with Compunction and Regret, if he is not inhuman. He cannot diſcharge that Duty who is not in a Condition to do it. Why ſhould any Man enter into the State he is not fit for? It is by this Means there are ſo many Poor, and Mankind in general ſo ill provided for. Therefore to tolerate Whores, and to take Care of their Children at the public Charge, would be a public Benefit; unleſs the Public would take Care of all poor People's Children, the better to encourage Marriage as was mentioned juſt now, and to prevent the Fears of young Men's entering into that State, allow of Divorce for reaſonable and juſt Occaſions, and make Marrying and Unmarrying to be performed in the ſame manner, and at the ſame Expence.

If dealing with public Women be thought a Sin againſt Poſterity, by not promoting it; ſo is Matrimony when ill, by ill promoting the good of Poſterity: For Family Contentions ſpoil the Education of Children, whereby their Nature becomes evil, their Manners depraved, and the Morals of the Nation corrupted as much as by any other Means.

As for the *Sin* of Whoring, was it regulated ſo as not to be injurious to Society, there would be none in it. What is no Injury to Man can be none to God, whoſe Laws are all calculated for the good of Man; he himſelf being compleatly perfect, can receive no Benefit or Pleaſure, nor any

Degree

Degree of Injury or Diſpleaſure from human Actions. For to ſuppoſe the contrary, either the one or the other, is to imagine that the Pleaſure of God or his Happineſs depends on the Will and Pleaſure of Man, or on his Obedience or Diſobedience. And as to common Women, no Injury is done to them, by making Uſe of them who are moſt fit for common Uſe; their Minds and Bodies being already Proſtitute, and ſo qualified by their Function, that Preachers may ſpend their Rhetoric, and Logicians their Arguments in vain, for the Converſion of thoſe that chuſe that Kind of Life, their Natures are addicted to. And he does no Injury to himſelf by the Uſe of them that receives none from them, and only finds a Diſcharge neceſſary for his Health's Sake. Therefore tolerating and regulating Courtezans by proper Authority, would convert a private Evil to a public Good. The leſs Violence and Perſecution they are under, the leſs private Diſhoneſty they will be guilty of, becauſe their Neceſſities will be the leſs; for Neceſſity often makes People act contrary to their natural Diſpoſitions, and corrupts thoſe that might otherwiſe ſhine in Virtue. A Woman, becauſe ſhe is a Harlot, is not therefore neceſſarily a Thief. 'Tis Misfortune or Neceſſity that generally produces both. When Whores find it their Intereſt to be honeſt, they will be as honeſt as others. Beſides thoſe, that are by Nature fit for this public Buſineſs, are not fit for Wives; conſequently, by indulging theſe, there will be the leſs Number of bad Wives. If they would behave well, ſcarce any Man will venture to take to Wife one of theſe Proſtitutes; ſo that they who have begun it are under a Neceſſity of following on in the ſame Courſe. For theſe are thoſe that either cannot contain, for if they could they would have done otherwiſe, or by other Neceſſity were reduced to it; and as long as the ſame Neceſſity holds, the Conſequence will be the ſame, unleſs a new Neceſſity of another Kind ariſe to prevent it.

'Tis certain that a Proſtitute is not a laudable Employ, becauſe it is generally the Effect of Poverty; but 'tis a tolerable one, becauſe better that than worſe; 'tis an Evil in human Nature compared with the excellent Union between one and one who dwell together in Harmony; but 'twill be found a neceſſary Evil, if rightly underſtood, permitted and uſed. As great a Sin as it is, Poverty ſeems greater, for none but poor Whores ſuffer for their Practice; therefore their Suffering is not the Effect of their Crime, but of their Poverty: Therefore diſtreſſing them more, cannot make them better; becauſe it increaſes their Neceſſity, and makes the Cauſe of Proſtitution greater, and ſo reduces them to Thieving, a worſe Practice. 'Tis a neceſſary Evil, becauſe the Toleration of theſe is neceſſary to preſerve the Chaſtity of others, and young Men from everlaſting Ruin by precipitate Marriage which never can be remedied. Therefore it would be well, if in every Town at leaſt ſo many as are ſufficient were permitted to abate the Fire of thoſe that cannot contain, and yet may not be in proper Condition to marry

marry; and alſo to reduce to Reaſon thoſe that are inclined to that Sort of Folly or Madneſs, and muſt have irreſiſtible Vent. For Nature ſupplies Man with a plentiful Stock of Juice and Spirits for Pleaſure-ſake, more than can be waſted for Procreation. And it is no Injury to a Man, when he comes to marry, to have enjoyed Women with Moderation before; the Women themſelves being Judges.

I wonder theſe Women have never thought of another Method of making themſelves or their Profeſſion public, than that of patrolling the Streets, a very improper Method, which ſome think is too much in Imitation of Satan, who is repreſented *walking about ſeeking whom he may devour*; that they have never thought of hanging ſomething Scarlet out at the Window of their Lodgings, in Imitation of their great Patroneſs RAHAB, who hung out a ſcarlet Line; it might be perhaps a Rope covered with red Cloth, *Joſhua* ii. 18, 21. and who is afterwards numbered among the Saints, *Hebrews* xi. 31. Or, if ſhe is a Houſe-keeper, the Sign of *Mary Magdalene*, is not an improper one, whom holy Church owns was a beautiful Courtezan, and one of the moſt charming Diſciples of the Lord *Jeſus*.

Public Whoring under proper Regulations, is as neceſſary to a Town, as a common Place for Evacuation is neceſſary to every Houſe, without which all the Houſe will ſoon be in a naſty Pickle; and ſome can as eaſily bear to have the Fore-door of their Houſe ſhut up as their Back-door. No Violence or Force can prevent a Madneſs ſo natural to Men and Women. Whatever Reformers may think, they always make more Miſchief by their Violence, than they are able to prevent.

I conclude with a Word of Advice, firſt to young Men. It is a hard Matter to moſt to uſe Moderation in the Purſuit of Pleaſure, whereby many are emaciated and die young: But 'tis the Part of the Prudent to follow a Mean in all Things. Extremes will either mar your Underſtanding, or your Manners. The Flame that burns fiercely, the ſooner conſumes its Fuel. Pleaſure is to be uſed only for the Sake of Health and Eaſe; which, becauſe it is hard to bridle within juſt Bounds, I apprehend, that moſt wiſe Men have required of you a total Reſtraint. He that can wholly abſtain, keeps himſelf out of Danger, and has Safety inſtead of Pleaſure, which often produces Pain in its Conſequences; and therefore requires Care and Conduct to regulate. 'Tis the greateſt Prodigality to make a Burnt-offering of yourſelves on *Venus*'s Altar. A Body drained of its Juices, and macerated, makes a feeble old Age. In all Enjoyments 'tis good to beware of Exceſs, and not be captivated with the Love of Pleaſure. It ſhould be made a Refreſhment, not a Toil; that after waſting your Follies you may act the wiſer, that your Minds may be more free for noble and neceſſary Uſes. If you would enjoy mental Pleaſures in old Age, keep Oil in your Lamps to enlighten your upper Rooms; therefore ſpend in Moderation, and not too laviſhly. Purity of Mind

Mind ſhould be always preſerved, that the Corruption of Pleaſures do not corrode it. Fools only prodigally waſte their Bodies, their Health and their Subſtance. 'Tis commendable to be always honeſt and juſt to Woman, as well as to Man, in the Performing of Contracts; that you do not by your own Practice teach thoſe Diſhoneſty, that you have to do with. Let a conſcientious Care direct you. Never debauch any Virgin, nor corrupt any Matron, ſince other more proper Perſons may be enjoyed: Nor give any Occaſion to any to grieve by your Falſhood, which muſt give Pain and Regret to an honeſt Mind to have been the Cauſe of.

Let thoſe that are in the *decline of Age*, be careful of the Balſam of Life, and not deſire the Return of Youth, which they cannot obtain, nor too rigorouſly condemn thoſe Pleaſures or Follies they are not ſo fitted to enjoy: But, content with what is paſt, regard thoſe more noble Faculties of Reaſon, the principal Pleaſure of the Soul, when ſenſitive Pleaſures begin to leave them.

To *Virgins*. My greateſt Concern is for you; you muſt endeavour to reſiſt with all your Might, the Temptations of young Men, that would enſnare you; and take the utmoſt Care to truſt none but ſuch in whoſe breaſt lodges Sentiments of virtuous Honour, and who have a ſtrict Regard to Truth, with whom you have a Proſpect of being happy all your Days. You have the moſt difficult Part to act, and the only Way to keep your Fortreſs from ſurrendring is never to treat about it, but when Terms fit to be accepted are propoſed by one whoſe Actions have been known not to give his Lips the Lye. Preſerve your Virginity for a Huſband, that you may find the Reward in his laſting Love and good Opinion of your Chaſtity and Fidelity. Love and Affection founded on Virtue is the moſt durable.

To *Parents*, whoſe Children by the Force of youthful Vigour and agreeable Temptations have acted contrary to their Wills: Conſider what ſenſible and pleaſing Titulations you had yourſelves when young, and forgive the Faults that Nature makes in thoſe that have erred. If you preſerved yourſelves in your youthful Days, yet make ſome Allowance for the Difference of Conſtitutions and Circumſtances. Which of you having Children, had not much rather they make a Slip that is recoverable as to Condition, than be in a Condition irrecoverably miſerable. Scarce any, with Reſpect to their Sons, but would chuſe this; and would as freely chuſe the ſame, reſpecting their Daughters, if they rightly conſidered Things, and if the barbarous Cuſtom of making ſo wide a Diſtinction where no ſuch is, did not pervert the Judgments of People, and occaſion their partial Cenſoriouſneſs. This I mention to ſtir up in Parents a placable forgiving Nature, and to abate raſh Cenſure in all, not to corrupt any. What I have written, I intend for a general Good; and, I am diſpoſed to hope, will be more conducive to it, than many Writings that have a more ſanctified Appearance.

The SPEECH *of Miſs* POLLY BAKER, *ſaid to be delivered by her before a Court of Judicature in the Colony of* Connecticut *in* New-England; *where ſhe was proſecuted the* fifth *Time, for having a Baſtard Child, which influenced the Court, to diſpenſe with her Puniſhment, and induced one of her Judges to marry her the next Day (a).*

MAY it pleaſe the honourable Bench, to indulge me in a few Words: I am a poor unhappy Woman, who have no Money to fee Lawyers to plead for me, being hard put to it to get a tolerable Living (*b*).

I ſhall not trouble your Honours with long Speeches, for I have not the Preſumption to expect, that you may by any Means be prevailed on to deviate in your Sentence from the Law in my Favour (*c*). All I humbly hope is, that your Honours would charitably move the Governor's Goodneſs on my Behalf, that my Fine may be remitted.

This is the fifth Time, Gentlemen, that I have been dragged before your Court on the ſame Account (*d*); twice I have paid heavy

(*a*) This Story is atteſted for Truth, but whether true or no, the Reaſons that follow are true: But many Perſons, in Matters of Belief, *ſtrain at a Gnat, and ſwallow a Camel:* They cannot credit the Truth of a Story that has nothing improbable in it; but can credit Stories reported by a credulous People to be done in diſtant Ages, and in a ſtrange Country, which are impoſſible to Nature.

(*b*) No Penny, no *Pater Noſter* whether in Law or Goſpel, the Poor could ſeldom have Right by Law, and formerly 'twas *impoſſible* for rich Men to go to Heaven by the Goſpel, when *Chriſt* and his Miniſters were poor; but if the Caſe be the ſame now, *Chriſt* have Mercy upon his Miniſters, for they are now rich.

(*c*) Religious Sinners have more Aſſurance; they imagine, as they are taught, *Luke* xviii. that *Importunity* will work upon their Judge, and that therefore *they ſhall be heard for their much ſpeaking*, how much ſoever they ſpeak againſt it; or why do they pray ſo long, and often? Why ſo often utter the ſame Expreſſions over and over again; if Importunity be not the availing Grace, if the beſt Prayer-monger or Speech-maker to God Almighty does not ſtand the beſt Chance.

(*d*) 'Twas well they did not put her to Death for being a Witch, in getting five Children without a Huſband; which could certainly be done no Way but by Witchcraft.

heavy Fines, and twice have been brought to public Puniſhment, for want of Money to pay thoſe Fines (*e*). This may have been agreeable to the Laws, and I don't diſpute it; but ſince Laws are ſometimes unreaſonable in themſelves, and therefore repealed; and others bear too hard on the Subject in particular Circumſtances, and therefore there is left a Power ſomewhat to diſpenſe with the Execution of them (*f*), I take the Liberty to ſay, that I think this Law, by which I am puniſhed, is both unreaſonable in itſelf, and particularly ſevere with Regard to me, who have always lived an inoffenſive Life in the Neighbourhood where I was born; and defy my Enemies (if I have any) to ſay I ever wronged Man, Woman or Child. Abſtracted from the Law I cannot conceive (may it pleaſe your Honours) what the Nature of my Offence is (*g*). I have brought five fine Children into the World at the Riſque of my Life, and have maintained them well by my own Induſtry, without burdening the Townſhip (*h*); and would have done it better, if it had not been for the heavy Charges and Fines I have paid (*i*).

Can it be a Crime (in the Nature

(*e*) If it was juſt to inflict any Puniſhment or Fine, it ſhould have been inflicted on the Man; the Woman, I think, ſuffered enough in bearing the Children, and bringing them forth.

(*f*) And very reaſonable it ſhould be ſo, becauſe Circumſtances ſo far alter the Nature of Things, that the ſame Action may be good or evil, as it is differently circumſtanced.

(*g*) 'Twould be very hard by the Laws of Reaſon and Nature, without the arbitrary Authority of Law, to prove her a Criminal, or Offender. Can an inoffenſive Life offend God, that does not offend Man?

(*h*) Surely the bringing them into the World, and bringing them up, was ſo much Puniſhment, that I believe few Women would do the ſame to enjoy the tranſitory Pleaſure in getting them; and as much as her Trouble exceeded her Pleaſure, ſo much more than Atonement ſhe made for her Sin, if that Pleaſure was Sin, that ſhe certainly did Works of Merit and Supererrogation. And if her Righteouſneſs more than balanced her Sin, certainly the Sin was done away, and ſhe ought to be deemed righteous; and the over-balance ſhould be charged to her Credit in the Book of Life. She ought not to be puniſhed for not having a Father to her Children, ſeeing ſhe was both Father and Mother to them.

(*i*) Is not mulcting the poor Parent for begetting Children out of the Pale of Matrimony, Robbery, by the Authority of Law, of the Children's Support. To beget Children is human, or agreeable to the Nature of Man; but to deprive them of their Subſiſtence, or what ought to be theirs, is inhuman or barbarous to human Nature. To enable Parents to bring up their Children, is pious and charitable; but to diſable them from doing their Duty by them, is impious and uncharitable: And if the Parents are poor, has a Tendency to *Murder*. If the Conſequence of ſuch Severity reduce the Parents to *ſteal*, to maintain themſelves and Offspring, the Sin is not in the Parents, but in the Law, which lays them under that Neceſſity; for Neceſſity has no Law, therefore cannot be ſaid to break any: That which makes the Neceſſity, makes the Sin: Wicked Laws make the People wicked. And they that make thoſe Laws, are the Authors of all bad Conſequences ſuch Laws produce.

ture of Things I mean) to add to the Number of the King's Subjects in a new Country that really wants People? I own it, I ſhould think it Praiſe-worthy, rather than a puniſhable Action (*k*). I have debauched no other Woman's Huſband, nor enticed any Youth: Theſe Things I never was charged with, nor has any one the leaſt Cauſe of Complaint againſt me, unleſs perhaps the Miniſter, or Juſtice, becauſe I have had Children without being married, by which they have miſſed a Wedding-fee (*l*). But can ever this be a Fault of mine? I appeal to your Honours. You are pleaſed to allow, I don't want Senſe; but I ſhould be ſtupified to the laſt Degree, not to prefer the honourable State of Wedlock, to the Condition I have lived in (*m*). I always was, and am ſtill willing to enter into it; and doubt not my behaving well in it, having all the Induſtry, Frugality, Fertility, Skill and Œconomy appertaining to a good Wife's Character (*n*). I defy any Perſon to ſay I ever refuſed an Offer of that Sort (*o*). On the contrary, I readily conſented to the only Propoſal of Marriage that ever was made me, which was when I was a Virgin; but too eaſily confiding in the Perſon's Sincerity that made it, I unhappily loſt my own Honour by truſting to his; for he got me with Child, and then forſook me (*p*). That very Perſon you all know; he is now become a Magiſtrate of this Country; and I had Hopes he would have appeared this Day on the Bench, and have endeavoured to moderate the Court in my Favour; then I ſhould have ſcorned to have mentioned it; but I muſt now complain of it, as unjuſt and unequal, that my Betrayer and Undoer, the firſt Cauſe of all my Faults and Miſcarriages, (if they muſt be deemed ſuch) ſhould be advanced to Honour and Power in the Government, that puniſhes my Misfortunes with Stripes and Infamy (*q*).

I ſhall

(*k*) Which is moſt Praiſe-worthy, to get Children, and take Care of them; or to get none and take Care of none? Which is moſt conducive to the public Good; or beſt for the Common-wealth? Suppoſing both to be good, yet which is the better? Which is the more laudable, a private perſonal Good, or the Propagation of public Good? Frugality or Hoſpitality, where either are practicable? Or, at leaſt, if Conſtitution and Circumſtances require the one or the other, where is the Crime of practiſing either?

(*l*) Becauſe both Miniſter and Juſtice marry there.

(*m*) Undoubtedly it is better to be at a plentiful Table, and to live in Credit, than to ſnap at a bit now and then, as if one lived by Stealth, and be always betrayed.

(*n*) Outſide Goodneſs often carries off the Prize; which, thoſe of modeſt, hidden and intrinſic worth Merit, but are deprived of.

(*o*) So that ſhe was puniſhed for her Misfortune, not for her Fault.

(*p*) 'Tis a moſt ſhameful Thing, that Men pretending to Honour or Conſcience, ſhould only pretend it to obtain their Ends; which having obtained, they ſacrifice all Honour and Conſcience, and yet would be thought to have it. But ſo eagerly do moſt Men purſue Pleaſure and Profit, that they leave Honour and Conſcience behind them in their Amours and Affairs, ſo that few are to be truſted in thoſe Concerns.

(*q*) It muſt be confeſſed, though 'tis diſagreeable to be told, that People do

I ſhall be told, 'tis like, that were there no Act of Aſſembly in the Caſe, the Precepts of Religion are violated by my Tranſgreſſions (*r*). If mine then is a religious Offence, leave it to religious Puniſhments. You have already excluded me from the Comforts of your Church Communion: Is not that ſufficient? You believe I have offended Heaven, and muſt ſuffer eternal Fire: Will not that be ſufficient? What need is there then of your additional Fines and Whipping (*s*)? I own, I do not think as you do; for if I thought what you call a Sin was really ſuch, I could not preſumptuouſly commit it. But how can it be believed that Heaven is angry at my having Children, when to the little done by me towards it, God has been pleaſed to add his divine Skill, and admirable Workmanſhip, in the Formation of their Bodies; and crowned it, by furniſhing them with rational and immortal Souls (*t*)?

Forgive

not ſuffer their *Crimes*, but for their *Weakneſs*, *Ignorance and Poverty*: For if two Perſons are guilty of the ſame Action (as in this Caſe) the Impotent and Poor ſuffer with Scandal, while the Powerful and Opulent generally eſcape with Impunity, and perhaps Applauſe, though the Poor may have Neceſſity to plead in their Favour; and this is naturally the Caſe, when Actions that are not criminal in themſelves are ſo made by Law; or Actions criminal in Reaſon and the Nature of Things, are by Law or Cuſtom eſteemed juſt. Sometimes indeed Men ſuffer for their Riches, as when they fall into the Hands of *High-way* Robbers, or *High-church* Robbers, as the Inquiſition in *Spain* and *Portugal*, where rich Heretics are *murdered* by the Law of that Church, that the Church by Law too may *rob* them and their Families of all their Wealth; and this Law is there deemed *holy* and *juſt*.

(*r*) The Precepts of any Religion, which is not eſtabliſhed on the Foundations of *Truth* and *Honeſty*, (and they are generally founded on ſomewhat elſe) are violated by Truth and Honeſty. Religion erected and eſtabliſhed on theſe, is good; and ſuch Religion only. All other is Knavery, and Tyranny, and injurious to the natural Rights of Mankind; and aims to make Sovereigns, as well as Subjects its Slaves and Vaſſals. 'Tis highly neceſſary in every Kingdom, that the King ſhould be Head of the national Church therein; or the Church will be his Head: If he keep not the Church under his Power, the Power of the Church, that is, of the Prieſts, will keep the King under. The Church will be always mild, when its Power is muzzled; and will do no Hurt, when it cannot. But every Church, when inveſted with Power, will pour out the Phials of its Wrath upon Men.

(*s*) If they believe eternal Torments are the Rewards of Sin in this Life, which they teach others to believe; or that *hereafter* God will puniſh all Men according to their Demerits; what Preſumption is it for them that believe ſo, to take God's Work out of his Hand (eſpecially in Sins ſaid to be againſt him only?) Or do they Juſtice *now*, in bringing his Juſtice on themſelves by their own Injuſtice. If this Doctrine was really true, and truly believed, I ſee no need of Puniſhments here; all that need be done, is to convince Men of the Truth of it. But Men act, judge and puniſh here, as if the Truth of this Doctrine was very uncertain, not to be depended on; and very little believed, though much talked of,

(*t*) An evident Demonſtration, that the having Baſtard Children is no Sin to God; and the bringing them up can be no Sin to Man.

Forgive me, Gentlemen, if I talk a little extravagantly on theſe Matters; I am no Divine: But if you, Gentlemen, muſt be making Laws, do not turn natural and uſeful Actions into Crimes by your Prohibitions (*u*). But take into your wiſe Conſideration the great and growing Number of Batchelors in this Country, many of whom, from the mean Fear of the Expences of a Family, have never ſincerely and honourably courted a Woman in their Lives, and by their manner of Living, leave unproduced (which is little better than Murder) hundreds of their Poſterity to the thouſandth Generation. Is not this a greater Offence againſt the public Good, than mine? Compel them then by Law, either to Marriage, or to pay double the Fine of Fornication every Year (*x*). What muſt poor young Women do, whom Cuſtom has forbid to ſolicit the Men; and who cannot force themſelves upon Huſbands, when the Laws take no Care to provide them any; and yet ſeverely puniſh them, if they do their Duty without them; the Duty of the firſt and great Command of Nature, and of Nature's God, INCREASE AND MULTIPLY; a Duty, from the ſteady Performance of which, nothing has been able to deter me; but for its Sake I have hazarded the Loſs of the public Eſteem, and have frequently endured public Diſgrace and Puniſhment; and therefore ought, in my humble Opinion, inſtead of a Whipping, have a Statue erected to my Memory (*y*).

(*u*) Actions *natural* and *uſeful* cannot be criminal in the Reaſon of Things, though made to appear ſo, by ſuch Prohibitions.

(*x*) If Marriage tend to the Good of Society, one might be tempted to think, that a Religion which diſcourages it, was given to Men by God, as he was ſaid to have given *Saul*, a King to the *Iſraelites*——*in his Anger*.

(*y*) This Speech is beyond all Statues that can be erected to eternize her Memory, which demonſtrate her to have been a Woman of excellent SENSE, VIRTUE and HONOUR, maugre all that may be ſaid to the contrary.

POSTSCRIPT.

ALL that in the preceding Pages may ſeem to reflect on *Jeſus Chriſt*, for diſcouraging *Divorce* and *Marriage*, will be eaſily conceived to be no Reflection on him, if he was *not* the Author of that Diſcourſe on this Subject; as I have all along in Honour of his *great* and *holy Name* ſuppoſed: Which may be very well granted, if we conſider, (1.) That the firſt Miracle he wrought, was at a Marriage-feaſt, as 'tis alledged in Favour of that Ordinance. (2.) That he declared, *he came not to deſtroy the Law, but to fulfil it*; that is, to enforce the Doctrine and Diſcipline of it; but ſetting a Law aſide *deſtroys*, not *fulfils* it. (3.) That he *never blamed* the Woman of *Samaria* for having had five Huſbands, and then living with one that was *not her Huſband*. (4.) That his gentle Behaviour to the Woman taken in the Act of Adultery, ſhews him to have been no ſevere Monk. (5.) That he very affectionately expreſſed his Love to little Children, *Suffer little Children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of ſuch is the Kingdom of God.* (6.) That he encouraged *Love* among his Diſciples, which ſhews he would not have them live together in Enmity. (7.) That his Saying to the *Jews*, concerning *Moſes*, *If ye believe not his Writings, how will ye believe my Words*, ſhew, that his Words did not *contradict* the Writings of *Moſes*. If they did not harmonize, how is the Belief of the one neceſſary to the Belief of the other? If it be objected, that granting this *Inſinuation* to be *true*, that this Diſcourſe with the Phariſees had not *Chriſt* for its Author; we ſhall be at a Loſs to know what he did ſay. I anſwer, better ſo, than ſay he *contradicted* himſelf, and *deſtroyed* the Foundation he *built* on; uttered Things *abſurd*, and delivered Precepts *unnatural*. It is moſt becoming for Chriſtians, to believe the *beſt* of him. If for theſe Reaſons, I may be excuſed from intending to reflect on *Chriſt*, by Conſequence, excuſing *me*, excuſes *him*.

And my Plea for tolerating *profeſſed Whores*, will be alſo found *pardonable*, if it be conſidered, that what is here propoſed, is not againſt *Law* or *Goſpel*; for the Reaſons for ſo doing, are offered with Submiſſion to the Law, to give them a *legal Toleration*, and *regulate* their *Practice*, that being managed with more *Modeſty*, *Decency* and *Decorum*, it may remove the preſent bad Conſequences attending it: Thus 'twill make the Evil *leſs*, and of the *greater* Evils before-mentioned, direct Men to chuſe the *leaſt*: Nay, 'tis the beſt Means that can be to prevent the ſhameful Sin of *Sodomy*. If 'tis objected, that this is encouraging *Profaneneſs* and *Impiety*; I anſwer, that cannot be; for to *profane* any Thing, is to uſe what is *holy* in an

an *unholy* manner; but ſure none will ſay, that the *Things* I mean, which are better conceived than told, are like *Aaron*'s *holy Breeches*. And therefore their natural Uſe cannot profane what were not ſanctified before.

And as for the *Impiety* of this Toleration, I ſee none in it; for who have been more pious than *public Whores?* Who has *enriched the Church of Rome* more than they, and their Lovers? And what has more benefited *Proteſtant Churches*, than the *Divorce* of King *Henry* VIII. Therefore this *carnal Toleration* and *indulging of Divorces* will not be injurious to the *Goſpel*; for theſe Sinners generally frequent the Church as much as others, and make as pious an *Exit*, when they are not *perſecuted*, which makes them *worſe* not *better*; and the *Goſpel* always thrives beſt in a *Soil fattened with Sin*. Who are more generous, frank, open-hearted, open-handed, and charitable, than theſe? And, if *Charity covers a Multitude of Sins*, ſure it may cover this one, and *where Sin abounds, Grace does much more abound*, therefore Sin is not injurious to Goſpel Grace. What then, ſhall we ſin, becauſe Grace abounds? God forbid. *Where there is no Law, there is no Tranſgreſſion.* Take away therefore the *Law*, and you take away the *Sin*; for 'tis none againſt *Nature*, as has been ſhewn. Theſe familiar ſocial Favours, which will always be wanted, ſought for, and granted, both are and may be done, without Prejudice to *Society*. If they were permitted and regulated by *Law*, they would then be *lawful*; a Licence from the Commons, or County-ſeſſions could do that. I don't think it would beſt anſwer the End propoſed, to prevent private Whoring, to ſtew them all up in one Place or Part of the Town, rather to let them live where they will, and publiſh themſelves by ſome feigned Name, on the Door or Sign, as of *Helen, Flora, Dido, Cleopatra, Letitia, Conſtantia*, &c. But wherever they live, let them conform to the *Laws*, that regulate their Behaviour. Let none object, that this would be tolerating Things *diſhonourable*. Is not this World one of God's Houſes? And muſt not every Houſe that is uſefully furniſhed, have in it, what the Apoſtle calls, *Veſſels of Honour and Diſhonour?* Are not Chamber-pots neceſſary as well as Drinking-pots? All Veſſels can't be Plates, Tankards, and Punch Bowls. Do they that break the Veſſels for diſhonourable Uſes, act wiſely? The moſt deſpiſed Things are of ſome uſe. *Our uncomely Parts have more abundant Comelineſs*, ſaid the holy Batchelor, which ſhews that he himſelf had been *pleaſed* with the *comely Sight* of our *uncomely Parts*; and they that prate againſt theſe *uncomely Parts*, have them, and find them as neceſſary, tho' hid, as thoſe Parts that are decked up to *public View*. I have ſomewhere read, that CATO, on ſeeing a young Nobleman coming out of the Stews, uttered Words to this Purport, Intent, or Meaning:

When turgid Luſt diſtends the vital Frame,
'Tis lawful to come here, and quench the Flame.

(5) Holl.

THE RESURRECTION OF *JESUS* CONSIDERED; IN A NSWER TO THE *TRYAL* OF THE WITNESSES.

Job xxxiv. 4.

Let us chuſe to ourſelves Judgment: Let us know among ourſelves what is Good.

Acts xvii. 11.

They ſearched the Scriptures daily, whether theſe Things were ſo.

——Ah! ſi fas dicere, ſed fas. PERSIUS, Sat. I.

————Somewhat I would ſay,
But fear,——Let fear, for once, to Truth give Way. DRYDEN.

The Third EDITION with great Amendments.

By a MORAL PHILOSOPHER.

N. B. *The ſecond Edition is ſpurious and erroneous.*

LONDON:

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M DCC XLIV.

THE INTRODUCTION.

In this Edition I have endeavoured to correct thoſe Expreſſions in the former which gave Offence, by removing ſome and mending others wherever it appeared neceſſary. Some Things that were in the former Introduction are tranſpoſed to more proper Places, but nothing material is omitted; and here are ſome Additions of Conſequence. What is called the ſecond Edition *is a pirated and faulty Piece. To diſtinguiſh this from that, 'tis called* the Third. *For theſe Reaſons I only deſire the Favour of my Opponents to refer to this.*

AMONG all the ingenious Gentlemen who have entered the Liſts againſt Mr. *Woolſton* in Favour of the Goſpel Miracles; the Author of *the Trial of the Witneſſes of the Reſurrection of Jeſus* ſtands foremoſt on the Records of Fame. The Conqueſt he has gained has ſpread itſelf far and wide, and reached even the remoteſt Corners of Infidelity; none having hitherto replied to ſo triumphant a Piece. The tenth Edition had publiſhed its Praiſe before it fell into my Hands by the Recommendation of Friends. After reading it, an ardent Love to Truth animated my Attempt to anſwer. I ſaid with Elihu, * *Great Men are not always wiſe, neither do the* Reverend *underſtand Judgment. Therefore ſaid I, Hearken to me, I will alſo ſhew you mine Opinion.* † *My Words ſhall be the Uprightneſs of my Heart. Let me not, I pray you, accept any Man's Perſon, nor give flattering Titles to Man* ‡, *for it is not good to have Reſpect of Perſons in Judgment.*

I preſume that worthy Gentleman, who is the Author of the Trial, might expect it to meet with Oppoſition, as well as Approbation; and that, where all reaſonable Liberty is eſpouſed by all Parties, it will be denied to none: By this Means Truth will be cultivated, and flouriſh. As there can no Honour accrue to an Author that may not be anſwered, ſo a generous Antagoniſt can ſeek no other Satisfaction than what the

* Job xxxii. 9, 10. † Job xxxiii. 3. ‡ Prov. xxiv. 23.

the Laws of fair Diſputants allow. The Perſon, that ſuppreſſes Argument by Authority, brings as much Scandal to the Cauſe, as to himſelf. He cannot be a good Man that commits ſuch Oppreſſion; nor can that be a good Cauſe which requires it.

What is not fit to be enquired into, is not fit to be known. If it be juſt and lawful to ſeek Truth, I hope it will not be criminal to find it on any Side. But if it be not proper to enquire after it, leſt it be found on the Side of Unbelievers, and Infidelity ſhould reign among us; is it then fit, that Fraud, and Falſhood, and Tyranny, and Perſecution, and Slavery, and violent perverting of Juſtice and Judgment ſhould reign in a Nation, and a Form of Godlineſs without the Power thereof, ſhould form the Manners of a People. Theſe muſt be the Conſequences of ſuppreſſing Truth, and Liberty, for fear Infidelity ſhould flouriſh. Wherefore ſhould it be thought more heinous to examine WHY, than WHAT we ſhould believe? If Faith be founded on Fact, let the Truth of the Fact appear; if on Reaſon, let Reaſon diſcover the Foundation; if on neither of theſe, but Faith be founded on Faith, that is, the Faith of one on the Faith of another, then let thoſe, that * *hold faſt the Traditions as they have been taught*, † *contend earneſtly for the Faith which was once delivered unto the Saints*. If it be criminal to examine into the Grounds of our Faith, it is equally criminal to know whether we believe right or wrong, or to think about it. If ſo, it is no Wonder that thoſe, who enquire leaſt into the Reaſons of their Faith, have the greateſt; and that thoſe, who think moſt freely, have the leaſt Share of it: Or that in Proportion as our Underſtandings are improved, Faith diminiſhes. He that ſearches for Truth has it at Heart, and I think he is juſtified by his Sincerity, and utmoſt endeavour, whether he find it or no. It is poſſible he may not reach the Mark he aims at, though his Intentions and Labours are laudable. *'Tis not in Mortals to command Succeſs*, but 'tis more noble to deſerve it: For Sincerity acquits a Man of Guilt, but not of Fallibility.

The Reſurrection of Jeſus, being made an important Article of Faith, becomes an Affair of Importance; therefore the Examination thereof with much Care, and Caution, ſeems highly neceſſary. If it be alledged that it is not proper to be ſearched into, becauſe it is a Myſtery, then it is ſo, either of Godlineſs, or of Iniquity, for according to Scripture there are Myſteries in both; ‡ and how can we know which of thoſe it is without examining? § *He that doeth Truth cometh to the Light that his Deeds may be manifeſt*. Let us bring this Deed to the Light of Reaſon. That the Truth of it may appear. The Gold that will not bear the Fire is counterfeit. That Fact or Doctrine, which cannot endure this Probation, cannot be true; for it flies the Face of Reaſon, which is Truth's Defender; and trembles at

* 2 Theſſ. ii. 15. † Jude 3. ‡ 1 Tim. iii. 16. 2 Theſſ. ii. 7. § John iii. 21.

at Examination, which Truth delights in.

Can that be eſteemed a fair Trial, where the Evidences are only on one Side of the Queſtion, and what they ſay muſt be admitted for Fact or Truth to both Parties; where the Defendants, to try their own Cauſe, admit none but their own Witneſſes. It was intimated by Mr. *Woolſton*, (p. 15.) *That 'tis happy for us, that the very Account, given by the pretended Witneſſes of this Fact, is ſufficient to deſtroy the Credit of it.* If ſo, thoſe Books muſt be notoriouſly bad indeed that deſtroy their own Authority. A Hiſtory may be very falſe, and not do that. Facts reported may be poſſible, may be probable, nay more, may harmonize, and yet not be true. And in ſuch Caſe, how can the Falſity thereof be found out without other Evidence? 'Tis not in ſuch Caſe a Sign of a bad Cauſe *to have great Scarcity of Proof*, or *not to bring Proof but to wiſh for it.* 'Tis certain, Books have been wrote by *Porphyry*, *Celſus*, and others, which contained what the Chriſtians thought were beſt anſwered by ſtifling, and burning. It is well known from ſome Fragments of them in Origen, that they contradicted what is related by the Evangeliſts; and that thoſe Writings died no natural Death. If they were anſwerable, why were they deſtroyed? If unanſwerable, we have the more Reaſon to wiſh for them; and lament the Martyrdom they have ſuffered. The damning Books and Men, for the Sake of Opinions, proves their's to be very bad that do it. If Chriſtians were required to prove the Truth of Goſpel Hiſtory, by the Writings of thoſe that were not Chriſtians, would they not be glad to find them, and have Reaſon to wiſh for them? Thoſe, who would examine the Truth of Things, ſhould hear both Parties. Why not as well in this, as in other Caſes? Unleſs the Accounts theſe pretended Witneſſes have given deſtroy their own Credit, who can detect their Evidence, be it ever ſo falſe, unleſs it exceeds the Bounds of all Probability, or Poſſibility? Since the Books wrote againſt them, which might confront their's, are anſwered by Fire, and made a Burnt-offering, of ſweet Savour to holy Mother Church and the Chriſtian Prieſthood. To find the Truth of a Caſe by the bare Teſtimony of partial Evidence combined againſt it, muſt be owned a very difficult Taſk: For in ſuch Caſe we have no other Way to inveſtigate it, but by finding a ſufficient Flaw in the Evidence; and by the Diſagreements and Abſurdities to invalidate the Teſtimony. Can it be expected that an equitable Iſſue ſhould be obtained, from what may be fairly reaſoned out of their own Reports? Such a Caſe no Body in a Suit of Law would care to ſtand the Trial of, where it is well known before-hand, that the Witneſſes are all agreed to caſt the Plaintiff; and tho' his Cauſe be Good, he can have no other. Any one, that is obliged to have his Affairs determined by ſuch Proceedings, would exclaim againſt it to the laſt Degree. What Chriſtians would care to have the Truth of the Goſpel Hiſtory tried by the Books of their Adverſaries, if any ſuch exiſted? If they were allowed no other Way to prove the

the Reſurrection of Jeſus, but by ſuch Books, what would they ſay, or rather what would they not ſay againſt ſuch manifeſt Injuſtice, and Partiality. But what muſt Men think, if without ſuch reaſonable Helps, the Facts aſſerted may be detected? If upon Enquiry it be found, that *though in other Caſes the Evidence ſupports the Credit of the Hiſtory, yet here the Evidence itſelf is preſumed only upon the Credit which the Story has gained, and this* very Credit *is that which creates in moſt Minds a Preſumption that it was founded on good Evidence*; the Credit of ſuch Hiſtory muſt ſink.

Some have objected, though it may not be what the Gentleman intended, that the Trial artfully caſts a Shade on one Side of the Argument, and a Gloſs on the other, by calling the Plaintiff's Council the Council for Mr. *Woolſton*, and that for the Defendants, the Council for the *Apoſtles*; by which an educational Prejudice is ſtirred up againſt any Man that ſhall anſwer it; as if ſuch Anſwer muſt be to vindicate that bold unfortunate Man, who, as he ſingly combated the whole Prieſthood, on him the Weight of the whole Prieſthood fell. But my Deſign is not to regard the Perſons of the Diſputants, but the Subject. In order to trace out Truth, I ſhall conſider the Objections made, without regard to the Objectors, and hope that other Arguments may be admitted than what are produced in the Trial. Reaſon is my only Rule, and the diſplaying *Truth* my only Aim.

I ſhall mention here what is alledged in the Trial, (p. 23.) *That Jeſus interpreted the Prophecies to another Senſe and Meaning than his Countrymen did, and by his Expoſitions took away all Hopes of their ever ſeeing the victorious Deliverer ſo much wanted and expected.* And (p. 89.) *That Chriſt was ſo far from falling in with theſe Notions, that it was his main Point to correct theſe Prejudices, and to oppoſe theſe Superſtitions, and by theſe very Means he fell into Diſgrace with his Countrymen, and ſuffered as one who in their Opinion deſtroyed the Law and the Prophets.* I believe it cannot be proved that Jeſus ſuffered for this Cauſe. And (p. 24.) *That when Chriſt oppoſed this Conceit at the manifeſt Hazard of his Life, as he certainly had Truth on his Side, ſo the Preſumption is, that it was for the Sake of Truth that he expoſed himſelf:* I wiſh for the Sake of Truth this could be proved. Again (p. 25.) *The People expected a victorious Prince, he told them they were miſtaken.* I believe they were; but I want to know where he told them ſo. (P. 27.) *He told the People there was no Foundation to expect a temporal Deliverer, warned them againſt all who ſhould ſet up thoſe Pretenſions; he declared there was no Ground from the ancient Prophecies to expect ſuch a Prince.* But why then was (p. 28.) *The Government alarmed, and Jeſus looked on as a Perſon dangerous to the State*; who, if this be true, was the beſt Friend to it; *and he had Diſcernment enough to ſee that his Death was determined and inevitable. But what if it ſhould appear, that after the Foretelling of his Death (through Deſpair of his Fortunes as it is ſaid) he had it in his Power to ſet up for King once more, and once more refuſed the Opportunity?* But the former is not yet

yet made good. *Men in Deſpair lay hold on the leaſt Help, and never refuſe the greateſt.* If this was his greateſt Help, 'twas very little. *Now the Caſe was really ſo; after he had foretold his Crucifixion, he came to Jeruſalem in a triumphant manner; the People ſtrewed his Way with Boughs and Flowers, and were all at his Devotion;* the Jewiſh Governors *lay ſtill for fear of the People. Why was not this Opportunity laid hold on to ſeize the Kingdom, or at leaſt to ſecure himſelf from the ignominious Death he expected?* An unarmed Mob could not enable him to do this: A miraculous Power might; but that was wanting; becauſe the People wanted Faith. Jeſus could not be their victorious Redeemer, unleſs they believed in him. But the Nation of the Jews *could not believe*, becauſe God for their Sins had *blinded their Eyes*, that they did not know Jeſus to be the Chriſt; and *hardened their Hearts* to put him to Death. And in cutting him off, who was the Meſſiah, they cut off all the Promiſes of his Kingly Government; and their Proſperity under it. But, be this myſtically or conditionally true, it concerns not the Reſurrection. Yet let not Truth be denied. The Evangeliſts ſay, that 'twas propheſied Jeſus ſhould be the King of Iſrael: For St. Luke ſays, * the Angel Gabriel declared, *the Lord God ſhall give unto him the Throne of his Father David, and he ſhall reign over the houſe of Jacob for ever*; St. Matthew tells us † the wiſe Men enquired, *Where is he that is born King of the Jews?* Nathaniel called him ‡ *the King of Iſrael*, ſo § did the Multitude. Jeſus was ſo far from rebuking them for it, that he juſtified them in it. And it appears, he was commonly called ‖ *the King of the Jews*, only he had not the Kingdom; therefore when he was about to ſuffer for it, *† he found it was *not of this World.* This Confeſſion he prudently made at a proper Time; though it had not the Effect to ſave his Life. But how does it appear by this, or by any Thing elſe recorded, that Jeſus explained away the kingly Office of the Meſſiah, or that the Meſſiah was not to be King of Iſrael, which, becauſe it never happened in a natural Senſe, it muſt be made good in a ſpiritual, to fulfil the Scriptures: For the ſame Reaſon Chriſt was a Prieſt and a Prophet, though each in a different Senſe. And why ſo? This not Choice but Neceſſity drives them to. It is Men's explaining the Scriptures, to ſerve their Purpoſes, reduces them to theſe Difficulties. Divines never expound them myſtically or artfully, but when the natural Senſe is againſt them, nor deny plain Reaſon as long as it ſerves their Turn. When the clear and obvious Senſe of Scripture and Reaſon fails to do that, they deny Reaſon and Scripture, or make ſad Work with both, as if they wanted either Underſtanding or Honeſty. Then it is, they puzzle themſelves and others, and ſeek any Sort of Refuge in Figures, Tropes, Allegories, and myſtical Twiſting the ſacred Wax to make it

* Luke i. 32, 33. Luke xix. 38, 39, 40. † Mat. ii. 2. Mat. xxi. 16. ‡ John i. 49. § John xii. 13. ‖ Mark xv. 12. *† John xviii. 36.

it take the Impreſſion of any Seal that is put upon it. I think it is plain, that, becauſe Jeſus was not King before the Report of his Reſurrection and Aſcenſion, the Apoſtles ſaid he would come again and be their victorious Redeemer, even before that Generation was dead. But the Time then mentioned for the literal Accompliſhment being long elapſed: It is now high Time to underſtand it ſpiritually; that is, to give it ſome myſtical Interpretation, that the Credit of the Scripture Prophecies, though ſhipwrecked in the letter, may be ſaved in the Spirit.

It having been obſerved, *that all falſe Religions in the World have pretended to Inſpiration*, Mr. *B.* ſays, (p. 11.) *This only ſhews that Revelation is, by the common Conſent of Mankind, the very beſt Foundation of Religion, and therefore every Impoſtor pretends to it.*

I conceive, that which is the Foundation of any, much leſs of every falſe Religion, cannot be the Foundation of the True. The common Conſent of deluded Mankind is no Argument for it. Inſpiration is the only Foundation any falſe Religion can lay Claim to, and be ſupported by. The true Religion has no Need of it. 'Tis founded on the eternal Attributes of the Deity, and the invariable Nature, Reaſon, and Fitneſs of Things. No Impoſtor can build upon this Baſis, which is certain, conſtant and unchangeable. It can produce nothing but Truth. It is bright as the heavenly Light, and free from all Ambiguities. Religion flowing from this Principle produces univerſal Benevolence, and is univerſally extended to all that ſeek the Knowledge of it. It makes all Men happy that embrace it. It perfectly ſatisfies all Doubts, and gives every troubled Soul unſhaken Reſt. Every Man's Station in Life, and the common Underſtanding inherent in Man's Nature, is ſufficient, without Skill in Books and Languages, to lead him to the neceſſary Knowledge of his Faith and Obedience. But pretended Inſpiration, diſtinct from this, ſubjects Man's Conduct to arbitrary Will, not known till revealed, nor even then: And ever liable to Alteration at Pleaſure, yet never to be queſtioned. 'Tis capable of as many Deceptions as any Impoſtor pleaſes. 'Tis the only plauſible Pretence, that is able to thruſt out Truth and introduce Falſhood in in its room. It has ſanctified the greateſt Enormities, and eſtabliſhed the greateſt Nonſenſe, for the Will and Wiſdom of God. It is capable of doing any Miſchief, and of ſetting up any Impoſitions; of deſtroying the Liberties of Mankind, of demoliſhing Virtue, of dethroning Reaſon, of advancing Tyranny, of ſetting up the moſt brutal Idolatry, and the moſt unnatural Barbarity, for the Worſhip of Deity. And all this it has done. It has been the Parent of all ſanctified Villainy, of all religious Lies and lying Wonders, of every Thing that is impious and falſe, in the Name of God, of every Thing that is ſcandalous of God, and pernicious to Man. And can ſuch a Foundation as this, be the beſt to build a Religion upon? Reaſon anſwers, No.

Having diſpatched theſe Preliminaries, I come now to examine the grand Point, concerning what

is

is ſaid in the Trial of the Witneſſes, of the Reſurrection of Jeſus, and by the Witneſſes themſelves.

In diſcuſſing this Point, it will be found, that the Conqueſt the Trial ſeems to have over Mr. *W.* was occaſioned by his granting too much. And that the Author falls under the ſame Dilemma, by taking Things ſaid, for granted; and by endeavouring to prove the Truth of a Fact, by other Facts which equally want Proof. And it will be alſo found, that what we call Faith, what we value ourſelves for, is meer Credulity. We take Reports upon Truſt without examining the Truth of them; or knowing that what is reported of them whoſe name they bear, is their Report; or that their Judgment and Veracity were equal if it be. Nor do we enquire *how this Fact gained Credit in the World at firſt, Credit it has gained without doubt*, (p. 20.) yet we do not conſider on what Foundation it ſtands, nor that it is neither the more or leſs true, whether the Believers follow the Example of their Forefathers or not. The Merits of the Cauſe is not hereby known, nor can be without an impartial Examination. As my Reader ought not to take my Word for the Truth of my Opinion, leſt he ſhould be deceived for the ſame Reaſon, the Word of any other ſhould not implicitly be taken, for though he may charitably think me ſincere, yet my Sincerity is not ſufficient to convince his Judgment that I do not err. He therefore wiſely judgeth for himſelf, whether my Reaſons are ſufficient to prove that what I write is fit to be believed.

THE

THE RESURRECTION of JESUS CONSIDERED.

Foraſmuch as many have taken in Hand, to ſet forth a Declaration and Vindication of thoſe Things which are moſt ſurely believed among us, it ſeemed good to me, alſo to examine into the Certainty of thoſe Things wherein we have been inſtructed.

CONCERNING the *Reſurrection* of Jeſus, Mr. *B.* the Council for the Defendants in the Trial, (p. 9.) *Waves all Advantage from the mere Antiquity of the Reſurrection, for* (p. 10.) *if the Evidence was not good at firſt, it cannot be good now.* This is true: If Poſſeſſion then does not give a juſt Right, it is juſt to examine what Right it gives. But, if Right comes by Poſſeſſion, then whatſoever Poſſeſſion any Man has, he has a Right to that Poſſeſſion; then Power only makes Right, for other natural and legal Right there is none; but, if this Sort of Right be wrong, a fair Trial and a free Examination of Facts and Allegations muſt be granted.

Mr. *B.* ſays, (p. 11.) *Nothing can be more material than to ſhew a Fraud of this Kind, that prevailed univerſally in the World.*

The Belief of this Fact, whether it be a Fraud or not, has not yet, nor is ever likely to prevail univerſally in the World; and wherever it has prevailed, happy had it been, if Fraud and Force had been wanting to make it prevail.

And (page 12.) *Mahomet's* Story of going to Heaven, and coming to Earth again, it is ſaid, *has gained great Credit, and been received by many Nations. Very well: How was it received? Was not every Man converted to this Faith with the Sword at his Throat. In our Caſe, every Witneſs to the Reſurrection, and every Believer of it, was hourly expoſed to Death. In the other Caſe, whoever refuſed to believe,*

lieve, died; or, what was as bad, lived a wretched conquered Slave. And will you pretend theſe Caſes to be alike? One Caſe indeed there was within our own Memory, which, in ſome Circumſtances, came near to the Caſe now before us: The French *Prophets put the Credit of their Miſſion upon the Reſurrection of Dr.* Emmes, *and gave public Notice of it. If the Gentleman pleaſes to make Uſe of this Inſtance, it is at his Service.*

It is certain, that Violence exerciſed to make Converts to Religion is a Credit to no Party. But have the Chriſtians been innocent? The Promulgators of Chriſtianity did not eſtabliſh it by Force, till they had the Power. But, when Chriſtians were poſſeſſed of the Kingdom, the Sentence was, *Thoſe mine Enemies, who would not that I ſhould reign over them, bring them hither and ſlay them before me.* If the Precepts and Practice of *Jeſus* and his Apoſtles can juſtify the Chriſtian's Conduct in religious Affairs, it is well; they cannot be juſtified by their own Righteouſneſs. It does not appear to me, that every Witneſs of the Reſurrection of *Jeſus*, and every Believer of it, was hourly expoſed to Death; or that it was therefore true, if they were. But the Promulgation and Eſtabliſhment of Chriſtian Faith of one Sort or other has expoſed Millions to Death, and in moſt Lands where it has come, if it was not planted with Blood, it has been watered with it.

Mr. *B.* comparing the Caſe of *Chriſt*'s Reſurrection with that of Dr. *Emmes*, ſays further (p. 13.) *In one Caſe every Thing happened that was proper to convince the World of the Truth of it, in the other the Event manifeſted the Cheat.*

If every Thing happened that was proper to convince the World of the Reſurrection of *Jeſus*, there would be little Room left for Argument againſt it. Yet the World is ſo far from being convinced of it, that the *Jews* in Particular, among whom this was done, or ſaid to be done, were not convinced of it then, nor are they yet, for it was commonly reported among them, that the Diſciples ſtole him away by Night; and gave out he was riſen. But every Thing did not happen that was proper to convince the World, becauſe the one Thing neceſſary was wanting, that is, the public Appearance of *Jeſus* among the *Jews* afterwards as before. Should we have ſaid of Dr. *Emmes*, if his Body had been gone in the Night, and ſome of his Diſciples had afterwards atteſted he was riſen from the Dead, and they had ſeen him alive, that every Thing happened which was proper to convince the World of the Truth of it? But here is the Difference. The Event of Dr. *Emmes*'s predicted Reſurrection was known by Day-light, but the other was covered with Darkneſs.

Mr. *B.* ſays, (p. 11.) That *Chriſt Jeſus declared himſelf a Prophet, and put the Proof of his Miſſion on this, that he ſhould die openly and publicly, and riſe again the third Day*; *and* (p. 30.) *that though Jeſus referred to the Authority of the ancient Prophecies, to prove that the Meſſias was to die and riſe again; and that though the ancient Books referred to are extant, and no ſuch Prophecies are to be found, Whether the Prophecies can be found or no, it*

is not material to the preſent Queſtion; becauſe, adds he, *diſprove the Reſurrection, and we ſhall have no farther Occaſion for Prophecy.*

This, I think, ought not to be ſo haſtily paſſed over. I am not ſure, that *Jeſus* did foretel his own Death and Reſurrection; nor that he referred to the Authority of the ancient Prophecies to prove that the Meſſias was to die and riſe again; only that I am told ſo. If *Jeſus* had this Prediction from the Prophets, it was they, not he, that foretold it, any otherwiſe, than by his expounding what they ſaid. If the Proofs ſhould fail, that *Jeſus* foretold his own Reſurrection, then ſure he is to be diſcharged of having a Hand or Head in the Fraud. It is granted, the Goſpel Hiſtorians ſuggeſt there are Prophecies, which are not to be found in the Books they refer to; but this is ſaid to be not material. Strange! Is it not material whether what theſe Evangeliſts ſay, is true or falſe? Whether this is a true or falſe Inſinuation to countenance the Hiſtory? Whether thro' Ignorance they imagined there were Prophecies, which were not, and ſo were deluded? Or, Whether, through Deſign, they ſuggeſted there were, to delude others? Or, Whether there are not forged Interpolations crept into their Teſtimony, to ſet the bettter Gloſs on what is inſinuated? Might not the Writers, whoever they were, who could report Prophecies which were never delivered by the Prophets, report others which were never uttered by Chriſt? And write what they pleaſed of him, long after his Departure; and much more eaſily and boldly, if their own Words were to be the only Proof of it? If there be not ſufficient Reaſon to believe them in one Thing, may there not be juſt Reaſon to Queſtion them in other Things? If they are found guilty of aſſerting what there is no Proof for; what Reaſon is there to believe their Aſſertions, or to take them for Proof? As there is little Probability, that theſe Writings of the four Evangeliſts have been handed down to us, uncorrupted, thro' ſo many Languages, Tranſcriptions, and bad Hands, as they have paſſed, there is great Probability, that they are not free from Corruption and Forgery. If therefore, it is poſſible to prove them pure, it is highly neceſſary.

Mr. *B.* adds, *That Chriſt, by foretelling the Reſurrection, certainly put the Proof of his Miſſion on the Truth of the Event*, (p. 30.) If ſo, Why was not that Truth proved to the Satisfaction of thoſe People to whom he was ſent? They had good Reaſon to expect and demand his Appearance to them, after his Reſurrection, as the true Sign and Proof of his Miſſion; and might juſtly queſtion the Truth of his Meſſiahſhip, if it wanted that very Proof he promiſed them. If they ought to have had this Proof, why does the Gentleman ſay, (p. 77.) *That after his Death no farther Credentials of Chriſt's Commiſſion to the* Jews *could be demanded or expected?* And why did he publicly foretel his own Reſurrection, if he never intended to appear in Public after his Death? *For Mr.* B. *ſays* (p. 30.) *One would naturally think, that Chriſt's foretelling his Reſurrection, and giving ſuch public No-*

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tice to expect it, that his keeneſt Enemies were fully appriſed of it, carried with it the greateſt Mark of ſincere Dealing; and (p. 37.) that *the Prediction of Chriſt, concerning his own Reſurrection, was a Thing publicly known in all* Jeruſalem: *For it gave Occaſion for all the Care that was taken to prevent Fraud.*

Now, let us examine this Affair of Chriſt's foretelling his own Reſurrection, ſo that his keeneſt Enemies were fully appriſed of it; and that it was a Thing publicly known to all *Jeruſalem*. We have no other Way of proving it, but by the Evidence of the Evangeliſts, which, I ſuppoſe, no Believers will except againſt.

St. *Matthew* ſays *, *That the chief Prieſts and Phariſees came together unto Pilate, ſaying, Sir,* We remember *that this Deceiver ſaid, while he was yet alive, After three Days I will riſe again.* Now the Words, *We remember*, ſignify, that they heard him ſay ſo. But I find no Account where, or when, ſuch public Prophecy was delivered before the Prieſts and Phariſees, in any of the four Evangeliſts. St. *Matthew*, who alone tells the Story of Watching the Sepulchre, and ſealing the Stone, ſhould have given us a particular Account of this public Prophecy, but mentions no more than this †, *Certain of the Scribes and Phariſees ſaid, Maſter, we would ſee a Sign from thee. But he anſwered, An evil and adulterous Generation ſeeketh after a Sign, and there ſhall no Sign be given to it, but the Sign of* Jonas *the Prophet. For, as* Jonas *was three Days and three Nights in the Whale's Belly, ſo ſhall the Son of Man be three Days and three Nights in the Heart of the Earth.* That becauſe they were an *evil* Generation, no Sign ſhould be given them, ſeems Strange. One would naturally think, for this very Reaſon, they ought to have had a Sign; eſpecially, ſince ‡ *Jeſus* came *not to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repentance.*

Concerning which I have to obſerve, 1*ſt*, That theſe ſeem not to be the Words referred to by the chief Prieſts and Phariſees: *After three Days I will riſe again.*

2*dly*, That I cannot find any plainer, nor other public Prediction of a Reſurrection, or that poſſibly can be underſtood, or conceived to be ſuch, than that from St. *Matthew* before cited.

3*dly*, That what St. *Luke* ſays of this, ſeems to be delivered at the ſame Time, and on the ſame Occaſion: And all that *Jeſus* ſaid to the People, according to St. *Luke*, is thus §, *This is an evil Generation, they ſeek a Sign, and there ſhall no Sign be given it, but the Sign of* Jonas *the Prophet; for as* Jonas *was a Sign unto the* Ninevites, *ſo ſhall alſo the Son of Man be to this Generation.* The Expounder, that would make this to propheſy a Reſurrection, muſt be more a Prophet, than he that ſpoke it, if he ſpake theſe Words, and no more. Hence it may be queſtioned, whether St. *Luke* delivered the whole Truth, or St. *Matthew* nothing but the Truth.

4*thly*, The Words, even as they are in St. *Matthew*, are ambiguous, and do not plainly indicate a Reſurrection. The Rulers could not certainly know by this, that

* Matth. xxvii. 63. † Matth. xii. 38, 39 40. ‡ Matth. ix. 13.
§ Luke xi. 29, 30.

Jeſus was to die and riſe again, and be ſo much alarmed about it, who believed his Miracles no more than his Meſſiahſhip, and conſequently gave no Credit to his Prediction. Theſe Words, being of a myſtical Nature, are capable of more than one Signification; which may equally be proved true, as falſe; an Advantage that all Myſteries have. Therefore ſome other Expoſition may be given them, ſince he did not tell the *Jews* what he really meant by them; for theſe Words no more predict a Reſurrection from the Dead, than that *Jonah* was dead the three Days and three Nights he was in the Belly of the Fiſh.

5*thly*, The Writers might as eaſily make this Expreſſion to be a Prediction of the Reſurrection, as St. *John* does another, which is as unintelligible; and, when uttered, ſeemed neither to be ſo intended, nor underſtood. He tells us, * that the *Jews* ſaid to Jeſus, *What Sign ſheweſt thou unto us, ſeeing that thou doeſt theſe Things? Jeſus anſwered and ſaid unto them, Deſtroy this Temple, and in three Days I will raiſe it up: Then ſaid the* Jews, *Forty and ſix Years was this Temple in Building, and wilt thou raiſe it up in three Days? When, therefore, he was riſen from the Dead, his Diſciples remembered, that he had ſaid this unto them, and they believed the Scripture, and the Word that* Jeſus *had ſaid.* Before they had Occaſion to make a Prophecy of theſe Words, and apply them to what they affirmed had happened, they knew not the Meaning of them, nor remembered them. How then could the Prieſts and Phariſees give ſuch Explanation to ſo myſtical an Expreſſion?

6*thly*, Jeſus is alſo ſaid to have given the ſame Sign to the Jews at another Time, in anſwer to the ſame Demand as before, without explaining it at all, or ſhewing what he meant by it: Which ſeems to be an Evaſion to the Queſtion, and no Ways ſatisfactory. For, if he meant any Thing elſe, the *Jews* which then heard the Anſwer, and a Reader now ignorant of the Senſe commonly put upon it, and ſeriouſly deſirous to know the true Meaning, cannot find, that the Words point out a Reſurrection. † *The Phariſees alſo with the Sadducees came, and tempting him, deſired him, that he would ſhew them a Sign from Heaven? He anſwered, a wicked and adulterous Generation ſeeketh after a Sign, but there ſhall no Sign be given it, but the Sign of the Prophet* Jonas, *and he left them and departed.* The ſame Story according to St. *Mark* runs thus ‡, *And the Phariſees came forth, and began to Queſtion with him, ſeeking of him a Sign from Heaven, tempting him; and he ſighed deeply in his Spirit, and ſaith, Why doth this Generation ſeek after a Sign? Verily, I ſay unto you, there ſhall no Sign be given to this Generation. And he left them.* Here is not ſo much as the Sign of the Prophet *Jonah* given them. In St. *Matthew*, Jeſus is reported to give them that Sign which they could make nothing of, and in St. *Mark*, to give them no Sign at all.

7*thly*, This Demand of a Sign from

* John ii. 18, 19, 20, 21, 22. † Matth. xvi. 1. ‡ Mark viii. 11, 12.

from Heaven, which the Scribes, Phariſees, and Sadducees made, ſhews, that they wanted Jeſus to give them an evident Miracle, ſuch as their Senſes might be Judges of, to convince them, that he was the Meſſiah whom they expected, and whom he would have them believe him to be: Which intimates, that they were not ſatisfied, that he had done any Miracle, nor does his Anſwer refer them to any.

8*thly*, None of the Evangeliſts give the leaſt Hint, that Jeſus ever *publicly* declared to the Prieſts, Scribes, Phariſees, or Sadducees, that *after three Days he would riſe again*; nor when, or where, he made ſuch Declaration, or any Thing like it, that plainly predicted his Reſurrection to them. So that this Report wants Confirmation, even among the Evangeliſts themſelves. And none of theſe mention the Explanation annexed to the Parable of *Jonah*, but St. *Matthew* once, which I firſt mentioned. And as he had more Occaſion for a Prophecy of this Nature than the Others had, to confirm his Story of the Watch and Seal; which none of the others ſay any Thing of; ſo he adds ſomething more than they do to this, which is called a Prophecy, but is rather a prophetic Riddle, Which yet is falſe in Fact, in two Reſpects.

1*ſt*, As to Time this tells us, *The Son of Man was to lie* THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS *in the Heart of the Earth*; *as* Jonah *did three Days and three Nights in the Whale's Belly*. Whereas, *Jeſus* lay but the Time of one Day and an Half, that is, two Nights and a Day, if he did that, for 'tis not known when the Body was gone; only it could not be found at the End of the ſecond Night. So that he laid but Half the Time of three Days and three Nights at moſt: For he was buried the Evening of the Preparation-day, and was not in the Sepulchre, at the Dawning of the Day which followed the Preparation*. And, according to common Computation and common Senſe, two Nights and one Day can never be three Nights and three Days; nor can any Man make them ſo, tho' he preach three Days and three Nights about it. But thoſe, who can work Miracles in Words, can as eaſily do it in Numbers. Nor is it to be wondered at, if ſuch myſtical Accomptants, who can make three to be one, and one to be three, without confounding the one, or dividing the other, ſhould make one and an Half to be three, which comes nearer the Mark. They, that are ſo well ſkilled in caſting a Figure, can eaſily prove, that *in the ſecond Night* is the ſame as *after the third Day*, and that *within* and *after* three Days are *equivalent*.

2*dly*, This Prediction was not fulfilled: Becauſe the Sign, promiſed to be given, was not given to thoſe it was promiſed to. For if *no Sign was to be given to* THAT EVIL AND ADULTEROUS *Generation, but the Sign of* Jonas the *Prophet*, the only Proof of Jeſus being the Meſſiah depended upon that Sign being given, or that Prophecy being fulfilled, to the Satisfaction of *that evil and adulterous Generation*. But how could *Jonah*, who was a falſe Prophet

* Matth. xxvii. 57. and xxviii. 1.

to *Nineveh*, and had fretted himſelf to Death for it ſeveral Generations before, be a true Sign to *that* Generation? And unleſs *Jeſus* appeared after his Reſurrection to them (not to his Diſciples only) then that Prophecy was not fulfilled in Fact. Yet 'tis not ſo much as ſaid that he did this, or that any ſaw him, but his Diſciples and Friends, who were not that *evil Generation*, being * *not of the World, but choſen out of it*. For that *wicked* Generation ſaw him not: This Sign was not given, nor the Thing ſignified, fulfilled to that *adulterous* Generation. Therefore 'tis probable that this is Forgery, and falſely fathered on Jeſus Chriſt, by thoſe who found it neceſſary, and had Opportunity ſo to do, or is miſrepreſented by Tranſcribers.

But, according to three Evangeliſts, I find that Jeſus had foretold his Death and Reſurrection no leſs than five Times to his Diſciples only.

The firſt was, after he had examined what Men thought of him, and who they themſelves took him to be, before his Tranſfiguration, when St. *Peter* rebuked him for it. St. *Matthew* ſays †, *From that Time forth, began Jeſus to ſhew unto his Diſciples, how that he muſt go unto* Jeruſalem *and ſuffer many Things of the Elders, and chief Prieſts, and Scribes, and be killed and be raiſed again the third Day.* St. *Mark* tells us ‡, That *he began to teach them, that the Son of Man muſt ſuffer many Things, and be rejected of the Elders, and of the chief Prieſts, and Scribes, and be killed, and after three Days riſe again. And he ſpake that Saying openly.* Yet this Word, *openly*, means only *plainly*, for that Saying was not ſpoken openly to the *People*, but to his *Diſciples*, of whom he aſked, Who Men ſaid he was? But St. *Luke* put this out of all Doubt, for he ſays, that, as he was alone praying, the Diſciples were with him, and § to *them* he ſaid, *The Son of Man muſt ſuffer many Things, and be rejected of the Elders, and chief Prieſts, and Scribes, and be ſlain, and be raiſed the third Day.* This I ſuppoſe the Writers intended for the firſt Publication of this Prediction.

The ſecond Time Jeſus is ſaid to have foretold his Reſurrection to his Diſciples, was after his Transfiguration, by St. *Matthew* thus ||, *And as they went down from the Mountain, Jeſus charged them, ſaying, Tell the Viſion to no Man, till the Son of Man be riſen from the Dead.* By St. *Mark* thus *†, *And as they came down from the Mountain, he charged them, that they ſhould tell no Man, what Things they had ſeen, till the Son of Man was riſen from the Dead. And they kept that Saying with themſelves, queſtioning one with another, what the Riſing from the Dead ſhould mean,* though he himſelf had told them *that* plain enough, but a little before, according to the ſame Evangeliſt.

The third Time was, when Jeſus was in *Gallilee*, he foretold his Reſurrection to his Diſciples. According to St. *Matthew* ††, *While they abode in Galilee, Jeſus ſaid unto them, the Son of Man ſhall be betrayed into the Hands of Men; and they ſhall kill him, and the third Day*

* John xv. 19. † Matth. xvi. 21. ‡ Mark viii. 27, 31. § Luke ix. 18, 22. || Matth. xvii. 9. *† Mark ix. 9, 10. †† Matth. xvii. 22, 23.

Day he ſhall riſe again; and they were exceeding ſorry. According to *Mark* thus *, *And he paſſed thro'* Galilee, *and would not that any Man ſhould know it: For he taught his Diſciples and ſaid unto them, The Son of Man is delivered into the Hands of Men, and after that he is killed, he ſhall riſe the third Day. But they underſtood not that Saying, and were afraid to aſk him.* 'Tis equally ſtrange, that they ſhould be ſorry for what they did not underſtand; as, that they ſhould not underſtand what they were ſorry for; except they were ſorry they did not underſtand it. Obſerve what goes before, the Reaſon why Jeſus deſired Privacy was, becauſe he told this to his Diſciples, and would have no Body elſe know it. According to St. *Luke* † it runs thus: *Jeſus ſaid unto his Diſciples, Let theſe Sayings ſink down into your Ears, for the Son of Man ſhall be delivered into the Hands of Men. But they underſtood not this Saying, and it was hid from them, and they perceived it not; and they feared to aſk him of that Saying.* If he ſaid no more, I don't wonder at it, for here's no Death nor Reſurrection hinted at. Yet if Jeſus then foretold it, as St. *Matthew* and St. *Mark* ſay, I wonder St. *Luke* did not mention it. This, like a Ray of Light, diſcovers that *ſome Enemy* to Truth, *in the Night, has ſown Tares among the Wheat.*

The fourth Time ſeems to be, when Jeſus and his Diſciples were in the Coaſts of *Judea* nigh unto *Jericho* ‡, as they were travelling to *Jeruſalem.* St. *Matthew* ſays §, *And Jeſus going up to* Jeruſalem *took the twelve Diſciples apart in the Way, and ſaid unto them: Behold we go up to* Jeruſalem, *and the Son of Man ſhall be betrayed unto the chief Prieſts, and unto the Scribes, and they ſhall condemn him to Death. And ſhall deliver him to the* Gentiles, *to mock, and to ſcourge, and to crucify him, and the third Day he ſhall riſe again.* St. *Mark* tells us ‖, that *as they were going up to* Jeruſalem, *Jeſus went before them, and they were amazed, and as they followed they were afraid. And he took again the Twelve, and began to tell them, what Things ſhould happen unto him; ſaying, Behold, we go up to* Jeruſalem, *and the Son of Man ſhall be delivered unto the chief Prieſts, and unto the Scribes, and they ſhall condemn him to Death, and ſhall deliver him to the* Gentiles, *and they ſhall mock him, and ſhall ſcourge him, and ſhall ſpit upon him, and ſhall kill him: And the third Day he ſhall riſe again.* St. *Luke* informs us *†, *That he took unto him the Twelve, and ſaid unto them, Behold we go up to* Jeruſalem, *and all Things that are written by the Prophets, concerning the Son of Man, ſhall be accompliſhed: For he ſhall be delivered unto the* Gentiles, *and ſhall be mocked, and ſpitefully intreated, and ſpitted on; and they ſhall ſcourge him, and put him to Death; and the third Day he ſhall riſe again: And they underſtood none of theſe Things, and this Saying was hid from them, neither knew they the Things which were ſpoken.* I am jealous of ſome fraudulent Deſign, by this unaccountable

* Mark ix. 30, 31, 32. † Luke ix. 43, 44, 45. ‡ Mat. x. 1.
§ Matth. xx. 17, 18, 19. ‖ Mark x, 32, 33. *† Luke xvii. 11. xviii. 31, 32, 33, 34, 35.

Confeſſion. Sure this is as ſurpriſing as any Thing in the Goſpels, that twelve Men together ſhould not underſtand ſuch plain Expreſſions. For their Underſtanding, or this Paſſage is to be queſtioned.

A *fifth*, and laſt Prediction of the Reſurrection of Jeſus, was ſpoken at his laſt Supper. Jeſus ſaid then, according to St. *Matthew* *, *After I am riſen again, I will go before you into* Galilee. And St. *Mark* † agrees with him: Which ſignifies he had made them very well acquainted with it.

As I have not mentioned what St. *John* ſays of Chriſt's foretelling his Reſurrection to his Diſciples, leſt it ſhould be thought I ſtifle his Evidence, I have examined him, and find that he ſays not a Word of it, but denies it all: And tells the moſt probable Truth, that the Diſciples knew not any Prophecy, that Chriſt was to riſe again. What elſe do theſe Words mean ‡, *They knew not the Scriptures, that he muſt riſe again from the Dead?* If St. *John* means the Scriptures of the Prophets, how ſhould they? For none ſuch are to be found. If Jeſus himſelf foretold them of it, that was enough to ſatisfy them; if there were no ſuch Scriptures. But the plain Truth is confeſſed to be, that the Diſciples neither foreknew nor expected the Reſurrection of their Maſter; and if ſo, there is Reaſon to ſuſpect all the Predictions of it, inſerted in St. *Matthew*, St. *Mark*, and St. *Luke*, to be Forgery.

I come now to the ſecond Period of Time, which reaches from the Death of Chriſt, to the Reſurrection, in which it will more evidently appear.

What Judgment are we now to form of the Watch? Can any Man of common Senſe think it probable, that the Prieſts and Phariſees ſhould be alarmed about the Reſurrection of Jeſus, if they never heard any Thing more of it than what has been mentioned; and that the Diſciples to whom it is ſaid to have been plainly and repeatedly foretold, ſhould know nothing of the Matter? Does this look as if (p. 30, 37.) *the keeneſt Enemies of Jeſus were fully apprized of it, and that 'twas a Thing publicly known to all* Jeruſalem? 'Tis ſtrange that Jeſus ſhould ſo expreſly foretel his Reſurrection to his Diſciples, and ſay nothing plainly of it to the Scribes and Phariſees, yet that theſe ſhould be ſo alarmed with the Words of a Man they did not believe, as to watch for it, and the Diſciples not underſtand, nor expect it. If the Prophecies were uttered as has been ſhewn, what could be the Conſequence, but that the Prieſts and Phariſees ſhould be ignorant of the Meaning of the enigmatical Prediction, and not give themſelves the leaſt Concern about it; and that the Diſciples ſhould be in full Expectation of it? Alas! Nothing leſs happened, according to the Hiſtory, but the very Reverſe. None expected to be attacked by a real or feigned Reſurrection more than the Prieſts or Phariſees; but none leſs expected and believed it than the Diſciples. Thoſe ſent out their Scouts to prevent a Surprize; theſe were ſurprized

* Matth. xxvi, 32. † Mark xiv, 28. ‡ John xx, 9.

ſurprized with the News of a Reſurrection they had no Expectation of. The Prieſts and Phariſees guarded him when dead, though they never regarded him living, as the Meſſiah, but to put him to Death for aſſuming that Character; which 'tis ſurpriſing they ſhould do, if they believed he wrought Miracles, and that he would riſe again. Theſe Predictions are not evidenced by ſuitable Conſequences, they produced no natural Effects; and *a Tree is known by its Fruit.* But that the Prieſts and Phariſees ſet no Watch, and that even the Diſciples themſelves were not forewarned of their Maſter's riſing again, will more fully appear by the Facts which the Evangeliſts themſelves relate.

When *Joſeph* of *Arimathea* took the Body of Jeſus from the Croſs to interr it, which all the four Writers agree to, St. *John* adds, * That *there came alſo* Nicodemus, *and brought a Mixture of Myrrh and Aloes, about an hundred Pound Weight; then took they the Body of Jeſus, and wound it in Linen Clothes with the Spices, as the manner of the* Jews *is to bury, and laid him in the Sepulchre.*

Suppoſe now the Prieſts and Phariſees went the next Day to ſet the Watch, as St. *Matthew* reports, did they not look into the Sepulchre to ſee if the Body was there? The Gentleman ſays, (p. 37.) *Without Doubt, when the* Jews *ſealed the Stone, they took Care to ſee that the Body was there; otherwiſe their Precaution was uſeleſs.* And, if they ſaw the Body, they muſt needs ſee how it was ſpiced, or preſerved for keeping, if it was done; they could not ſee one without the other. And would they not then, being Witneſſes of that, have taken the Soldiers back again with them, reſting contented that the Diſciples knew nothing of any Prophecy of his riſing again, and therefore could have no Deſign, under that Pretence to ſteal away the Body, and report he was riſen? Or did the Prieſts believe him more than the Diſciples? Or did thoſe know of a Prophecy which theſe knew not? Or would they expoſe themſelves to Ridicule by ſetting a Watch, and ſealing the Sepulchre?

But to ſhew what Dependence there is on the Truth of Goſpel-hiſtory, St. *Matthew* ſays, † when the Body was buried, Mary Magdalene *and the other* Mary *ſat over againſt the Sepulchre.* St. *Mark* tells us, ‡ That Mary Magdalene, *and* Mary *the Mother of Jeſus beheld where he was laid.* St. *Luke* agrees with them, and informs us, § That *the Women alſo which came with him from* Galilee *followed after, and beheld the Sepulchre, and how the Body was laid.* Therefore they knew to be ſure that *Nicodemus* had laid it in Spices. Yet St. *Luke* ſays, That theſe very Women *returned from the Sepulchre, and prepared Spices and Ointments, and reſted the Sabbath-day.* And St. *Mark*, ‖ That *they had bought ſweet Spices, that they might come and anoint him,* and came very early in the Morning, when the Sabbath was paſt to do it.

* John xix. 39, 40. † Mat. xxvii. 61. ‡ Mark xv. 47. § Luke xxiii. 55, 56. ‖ Mark xvi. 1.

it. St. *Luke* alſo acquaints us, * That *on the firſt Day of the Week, very early in the Morning, they came unto the Sepulchre, bringing the Spices they had prepared.* I cannot reconcile this with St. *John*'s Account; for, if the Body was laid in the Sepulchre with *an hundred Pound Weight of Spices*, what Need had it of more, or to be done again? But though theſe Relations differ, it ſhews the Diſciples knew nothing of the Propheſy of his riſing again. They, who put that in, ſhould have ſtruck this out, as it is in St. *Matthew*, where, what the Women went to the Sepulchre for, is concealed. If Chriſt's moſt intimate Acquaintance, his own Mother, *Mary Magdalene*, and the beloved Diſciple, knew not that he was to riſe again from the Dead, as St. *John* confeſſes, how ſhould the Prieſts and Phariſees know and expect it? It appears, they were under no Apprehenſion of any Hindrance or Moleſtation from the Watchmen. They conſulted together as they went, † *Who ſhall roll us away the Stone from the Door of the Sepulchre?* Which they would not have ſaid, if they had known it was ſealed; nor would they have gone to anoint the Body, if they had known there had been a Watch ſet. And if theſe Things had been done, how is it poſſible but they muſt have known them. So public an Action, done about him, on whom all their Thoughts and Affections were at that Time employed, could not be private to them. Beſides, nothing could be hid from the Diſciples, for St. *Matthew* knew ‡ what the chief Prieſts and Rulers ſaid in their Privy-council! They had free Egreſs and Regreſs, the Women went and came without Fear of being taken up by the Watchmen, and at the Dawn of the Day. Therefore, if they went to anoint the Body, there was no Expectation of a Reſurrection, conſequently no Prediction of one, nor Watch, nor Seal ſet to prevent a fraudulent one.

But why do theſe Evangeliſts tell different Stories? St. *Matthew*, one about guarding and ſealing the Sepulchre; St. *Mark* and St. *Luke* another, which ſhews it was neither guarded nor ſealed; St. *John* to the ſame Purpoſe, but different from both? Who can know the Truth from theſe diſagreeing Hiſtorians? Why did not they, that followed St. *Matthew*, make his Story good? Why not ſo much as mention a Word of it, but fly from that, and tell another which contradicted it? Will not ſome imagine that St. *Matthew*'s had been detected, therefore St. *Mark* and St. *Luke* tell another; and that, theirs having been alſo confuted, St. *John* comes and tells one different from all the reſt? If they had not been routed out of their Intrenchments, why did they quit them, and throw up others?

Becauſe 'tis abſurd, (p. 33.) and allowed to be ſo, (p. 37, 38.) That the *Jew* Rulers, not believing in Jeſus, ſhould regard his Prediction if they heard it; Mr. *W.* ſuppoſes the Reſuſcitation of *Lazarus*, which ſome had told them was a Fraud, induced them to beware of another; leſt bad Conſequences might attend it. St. *John*'s Hiſtory (c. xi.) relates,

* Luke xxiv. 1. † Mark xvi. 3. ‡ Mat. xxviii. 12.

relates, that *Jeſus* went from *Galilee* to *Bethany*, and, after the raiſing of *Lazarus* there, ſome of them that were preſent told the Phariſees what had been done; whereupon they and the Prieſts, far from being terrified by his miraculous Power, conſulted to put him to Death; and Jeſus with his Diſciples, as far from being animated by having ſuch Power, went from thence to *Ephraim*, a City near the Wilderneſs, and walked no more openly among the *Jews*. So wonderful was the Effect of ſuch a wonderful Work! Except that afterwards, within five Days of the Paſſover, Jeſus made his publie Entry into *Jeruſalem*, and then taught in the Temple attended by the Multitude, which, in the Trial, is ſuppoſed was formidable enough to have made him King, and after that he hid himſelf. Why then ſhould the *Jew* Rulers fear the Diſciples when their Maſter was dead, who with him when living, notwithſtanding all his miraculous Power, were afraid of them. But St. *Matthew* (xxi.) St. *Mark* (xi.) and St. *Luke* (xix) give a different Account. They agree that Jeſus came from *Galilee*, and entered *Jeruſalem* in a triumphant Manner, taught daily in the Temple, and lodged at *Bethany* where *Lazarus* lived; but conceal the Story of his raiſing *Lazarus*, if it was done; for what Cauſe themſelves beſt knew. But if it was not done; Who was the Relater of this Part of evangelic Hiſtory? or whence came it? Neither that, nor its Author, like Chriſt, came down from Heaven. There is no Fraud nor Forgery can be committed by the ſacred Penman of the holy Goſpel. The Myſteries whereof no carnal Mind can reconcile. But to proceed.

If we take the Opinion of the chief Prieſts and Phariſees from their own Words, as delivered by St. *Matthew*, they believed Jeſus was a *Deceiver*; and appear afraid not of his riſing in the Day, but of the Diſciples ſtealing him away in the Night. There is no Reaſon then to ſuppoſe, they were afraid of a true Reſurrection, or that they were convinced of any Miracles ſaid to be done by him. But (p. 38.) *they, being perſuaded he performed no Wonders in his Life, were not afraid of ſeeing any done by him after his Death.* Therefore (p. 39.) *that they ſhould kill him, that his Death might put an End to all Pretenſions; yet think him not ſafe when he was dead*, is, I muſt own, *a needleſs and prepoſterous Fear, and a moſt ſingular Caſe*, as the Gentleman rightly expreſſes it. What Reaſon is there then to believe, they ſealed and watched the Sepulchre? Surely, none. *Why* ſhould they fear? 'Tis anſwered, (p. 93.) *Becauſe, if once the People believe him riſen from the Dead, the laſt Error will be worſe than the firſt*, (i. e.) *The Jews will be more inclined and encouraged to rebel againſt the* Romans *than ever.* One would think, that, without a perſonal Proof, there would be but ſmall Inducement for Belief or Rebellion. Suppoſe the Rulers feared not Force but Stratagem: Plotting without Power cannot avail. I think the Magiſtrates had as little Reaſon to fear the Diſciples ſtealing the Body could give any Diſturbance to the State, as the Diſciples could have Hopes, or Proſpect of Succeſs by doing it.

For

For (p. 43, 44.) *Conſider now their Caſe; their Maſter was dead, and they are to contrive to ſteal away his Body: For what? Did they expect to make a King of the dead Body, if they could get it in their Power? Or did they think, if they had it, they could raiſe it to Life again? Or if they truſted ſo far to their Maſter's Prediction as to expect his Reſurrection, (which I think 'tis evident they did not) could they think the Reſurrection depended on their having the dead Body? It is in all Views abſurd.* Are not theſe Reaſons as ſtrong againſt the Prieſts and Phariſees ſetting a Watch to prevent the Diſciples ſtealing the Body; as it is, that the Diſciples ſhould attempt it? Could not thoſe think and reaſon thus as well as theſe? Why then ſhould they take theſe unneceſſary Precautions? Here the Abſurdity of guarding againſt a fraudulent Reſurrection is well ſhewn. But Mr. *B.* ſuppoſes they were afraid of a true one: (p. 38.) That is not warranted in the Text: But they concealed their Fears. Well then, ſuppoſe, for Argument Sake, they feared a real Reſurrection; Did they for that Reaſon ſeal the Stone, and ſet a Watch to prevent it? Prepoſterous Contrivance! Could not they think, (p. 44. 45.) *What are Guards and Centinels againſt the Power of God! Or could the Seal put God under Covenant! Or could it preſcribe to him a Method of performing this great Work! Or were the Guards placed to maintain the Seals in Oppoſition to the Power of God!* Therefore, that the Prieſts and Phariſees ſhould guard againſt a Reſurrection, fraudulent or real, *is in all Views abſurd.*

If Jeſus never attempted to be the temporal King of the *Jews*, but explained away all ſuch Notions of a Meſſiah, the Rulers had the leſs Reaſon to fear his real or feigned Reſurrection: For ſure there was no Need for them to fear the Diſciples making him a ſpiritual King, and to guard againſt it.

BUT now to try the Evidence itſelf, as it is found in St. *Matthew*, concerning the Occaſion of watching the Sepulchre; his Words are, * *Now the next Day that followed the Day of the Preparation, the chief Prieſts and Phariſees came together unto* Pilate, *ſaying, Sir, We remember that that Deceiver ſaid, while he was yet alive, After three Days I will riſe again. Command therefore that the Sepulchre be made ſure, until the third Day, leſt his Diſciples come by Night, and ſteal him away, and ſay unto the People he is riſen from the Dead; ſo the laſt Error ſhall be worſe than the firſt.* Pilate *ſaid unto them, Ye have a Watch, go your Way, make it as ſure as you can. So they went and made the Sepulchre ſure, ſealing the Stone and ſetting a Watch.*

I think I have ſhewn plainly, 1*ſt*, That the chief Prieſts and Phariſeee had no Reaſon to be under ſuch Conſternation, and therefore there is no Ground to believe they were. That it was ſo little to the Purpoſe to guard againſt either a real or fraudulent Reſurrection, that they could not poſſibly be guilty of ſo weak a Conduct.

2*dly*,

* Matth. xxvii, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66.

2*dly*, *That* WE REMEMBER *that Deceiver ſaid*, ſignifies, the Words were ſpoken in their Hearing, but no Account of ſuch public Prediction is to be found in all the Evangeliſts. That St. *John* not only gives no Account of any ſuch Prophecy, but flatly ſays, the Diſciples did not know he was to riſe again from the Dead, to whom the others ſay, that Jeſus told it plainly, and often. Therefore, it may be reaſonably concluded, that the Prieſts and Phariſees were Strangers to ſuch a Prophecy, and could not expect a Reſurrection; conſequently could not guard againſt what they knew nothing of.

3*dly*, There are two Abſurdities in the foregoing Relation.

1*ſt*, They tell *Pilate* that Jeſus ſaid, *after three Days* he would riſe again; yet deſire the Sepulchre may be made ſure but *till the third Day*. They ſhould have deſired Leave to watch it till the fourth Day, or till the Third was paſt; or, by their own Confeſſion, they might watch in vain; for the Diſciples might have ſtolen him away within the Time, unleſs *till the third Day*, and *after three Days*, have the ſame Signification. Theſe Words applied to other Caſes have a different Meaning, but, if in this they have not, Divinity-arithmetic and Vulgar are very different Things.

2*dly*, The Cauſe for watching the dead Body was, leſt the Diſciples ſteal him away by Night, *and ſay unto the People he is riſen again from the Dead*. What if they did, if they had no Proof for that Aſſertion: If the People could never ſee him afterwards, would they be ſuch credulous Fools to believe them? For ſuch they muſt be to believe ſuch a Miracle on bare Report; when the Event thereof could prove itſelf. It looks as if the Opinion of the Scribes and Phariſees was, that the Diſciples had been uſed to deceive the People by reporting falſe Miracles, and that the People had been carried away by ſuch Reports. Why elſe ſhould they be afraid they ſhould be ſo now? But why all this Fear of the Diſciples who, Mr. *B.* ſays, (p. 40.) fled and *hid themſelves for Fear of the* Jews, *out of a juſt Apprehenſion, that they ſhould, if apprehended, be ſacrificed with their Maſter?*

It is obſervable, that tho' this Story of the Sealing and Guarding the Sepulchre is of great Conſequence, being written to prove, that the Diſciples did not ſteal the Body away by Night; and was a public Action, it is received only on the Report of a ſingle Teſtimony. In other Writers this would look like an Interpolation, independent of the main Hiſtory, becauſe thoſe, that wrote after, are quite ſilent about it, ſo far are they from giving us any corroborating Inſtances for Confirmation Sake, to confound Infidels, and comfort Believers. For, if this was as publicly done, as is pretended, it muſt have been publicly known, and could not eſcape their Notice, or been unworthy their Regard. Therefore, here might be a Suſpicion of Forgery in the Relation, but that we are well ſatisfied of the Honeſty of theſe ſacred Hiſtorians; for every Thing they wrote is as true as the Goſpel. Though it may be hard to prove, that it was not

not in their Power, whoever they were, to write what they pleaſed of Jeſus ſo long after his Death as the Goſpels were written, nor has been in the Power of the Poſſeſſors, nor Tranſcribers, to corrupt what was before written.

How conſiſtent this Story of the Watch is with the other Facts related, has been ſhewn; and how credible it is the Event will ſhew. To conſider rightly of it, 'tis neceſſary to take it in the Words of the Text. St. *Matthew* ſays, * That *in the End of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn*, came two Women to the Sepulchre, and they not finding the Body, returned ſurprized. *Now as they were going back, came ſome of the Watch into the City, and ſhewed unto the chief Prieſts all the Things that were done*, viz. That *an Angel of the Lord had deſcended from Heaven, and came and rolled back the Stone from the Door, and ſat upon it; That his Countenance was like Lightening, and his Raiment white as Snow, and that for Fear of him the Keepers did tremble, and became as dead Men.* Whereupon, *when the chief Prieſts and Phariſees were aſſembled with the Elders, and had taken Counſel, they gave large Money to the Soldiers, ſaying, Say ye his Diſciples came by Night, and ſtole him away while we ſlept; and if this come to the Governor's Ears, we will perſuade him, and ſecure you. So they took the Money, and did as they were taught. And this Saying is commonly reported among the* Jews *to this Day.*

If the *Jew* Rulers placed a Watch at the Sepulchre and ſealed it, having heard that he ſaid he would riſe again, it was, no doubt, to ſatisfy themſelves, by their Report, of what happened; therefore, that Report muſt needs ſatisfy them, and the Hiſtory ſuppoſes it did; becauſe they hired the Watchmen to conceal it, and report what they would have believed, rather than what they themſelves did believe; and promiſed to ſecure them for ſo doing. Could the *Jew* Rulers ſo readily believe, and ſo fooliſhly think to conceal it, by this Means? Why did not the Watch rather report, that a Banditti of the Diſciples came in the Night, ſome with Clubs, Swords and dark Lanthorns, others in white Sheets, *&c.* and drove and frightened them away, being few in Number, in order, as they ſuppoſed, to carry off the Body; for they could not be many, becauſe it is ſuggeſted they might be all aſleep, and to conceal the Truth, all be bribed in Oppoſition to Conſcience and common Senſe, and in Room thereof to report a Falſity, ſcandalous to themſelves. But, if the Soldiers were many, the Prieſts and Rulers had the more Reaſon to believe, and the leſs Reaſon to act as they are ſaid to do. For if the Soldiers ſaw and told the Miracles that have been mentioned, which, for the Time, had ſo great an Effect upon them, that *they became as dead Men*; how could they take Bribes to lie in ſo impudent a manner? They who ſaw this dreadful Sight in the Night, or at the Approach of Day, muſt have acted like Men, muſt have had ſome remaining Terrors to reſtrain them! Surely, Gentlemen of the red Cloth have ſome Honour and Truth

* Matth. xxviii.

Truth in them, as well as the Gentlemen in black or white: But here, it ſeems, both agreed together to damn their Conſcience againſt all Convictions of Senſe. For what? Why, to prevent that from being known, which, if true, they had all the Reaſon in the World to believe could not be kept ſecret. And that they would by ſuch Means render themſelves the Objects of merited Vengeance. 'Tis ſtrange, unaccountably ſtrange! That thoſe Soldiers, who were juſt now almoſt ſtruck dead with Terror, ſhould loſe the Impreſſions ſo eaſily, and ſo ſoon, which it had made upon them, which but juſt before ſcarce left them Power to fly from the deadly Fright that an Earthquake and an Angel had put them in! That the Shock it made, in their Minds and Members, ſhould diſappear with Day-light! That for Money they ſhould all agree together to liſt themſelves in the Prieſt's Service to fight againſt God, when by ſo doing they might expect ſome heavy Judgment to fall upon them; but by affirming the Truth boldly, conceive reaſonable Hopes of being Captains in the Meſſiah's victorious Army, which was to conquer all Nations. For every one of the Apoſtles believing their Maſter, or what's reported of him, expected to be made a *Judge* when he ſhould be made a *King*.

What Conſcience, indeed, Prieſts have, themſelves beſt know. Sure it is a Slur upon the ſacred Function, to aſſert, that any of thoſe who ſtile themſelves the Servants of God, and think themſelves peculiarly ſo, ſhould ſet God at Defiance. The *Jews* Prieſts and Rulers, bad as they were, were Men, and bad Men have the ſame Paſſions, and are as ſubject to their Government as good Men, if not more; and as Miracles certainly work more upon the Paſſions than the Reaſon of Men; (for they wind up the one, but confound the other;) ſo they muſt have made at leaſt the ſame Impreſſion on them as on others. They were as willing to have a Meſſiah and Deliverer as their Countrymen, though through Ignorance * they did not think Jeſus that Perſon, nor care to run the Hazard of their Lives in eſpouſing his Cauſe; but choſe rather to give him up to Death, than that the *Romans* ſhould, under that Pretence, deprive them of their Religion, and the Remains of Power and Liberty which they were then poſſeſſed of. I ſay, though they did all this, yet the Prieſts, as well as the People, were credulous of Miracles, being nurſed up in the Belief of them, which when atteſted by their own Party, Perſons whoſe Veracity they could depend upon, as in this Caſe (not the flying Reports of a giddy Mob) muſt have prevented them from doing what 'tis here pretended they did. If Miracles can be ſuppoſed to have no Effect on human Minds, why are they wrought? Such Reports are not to be credited. When Effects do not correſpond as Conſequences of the pretended Cauſe, that Cauſe is to be queſtioned. Such Miracles deſtroy themſelves. Wonders, wrought in vain, reflect upon the Wiſdom of the Operator; 'tis exerting an extraordinary Power to no

* Acts iii. 17.

no Purpoſe, and therefore ſhews a Want of Foreſight. To ſuppoſe thoſe Miracles that were told the Prieſts and Phariſees, had no Effect on them, though they believed them, is to ſuppoſe, ſupernatural Power is too weak to work upon the natural Powers of Man. If they believed Jeſus was riſen from the Dead to be their King, (for it is evident he could not be the Meſſiah they expected without being ſo;) it ſeems more probable, inſtead of hiring Men to conceal it by a falſe Report, they would have liſted Soldiers in his Service, and ſet up his Banner at the Temple Gates, or at leaſt would have ſilently and cautiouſly waited the Event, leſt they ſhould be found guilty of fighting againſt God. For they muſt needs know, that a Work ſo miraculous muſt be of God, and that therefore they could not overthrow it. What Reaſon have we then to believe that they hired the Soldiers to report a Lie, and that they reported it?

Concerning the Sepulchre's being ſealed, ſuppoſing it was ſo, 'tis probable the Deſign of the Rulers was, when they came to diſcharge the Watch, to ſee whether the Body was there, or not. If there, whether alive, or dead? If the Body was gone, and the Seals broken, the Watch was placed to obſerve and inform them, whether it was done by Jeſus from within, or by the Diſciples from without. If, upon examining, they found the Seals untouched and the Body gone, they would then have had Reaſon to believe that Jeſus was riſen; for if, as reported, he could appear and diſappear, like a Ghoſt, yet (which is ſomething more) was capable of being examined by tangible Proof: I ſay, if his real Body could do this after his Reſurrection, there was no Occaſion for the Help of an Angel for Opening the Tomb, or unſealing the Stone. If Jeſus had thus come out of the Sepulchre, the Rulers, when they went to diſcharge the Watch, might have probably believed his Reſurrection, though they had never ſeen either that, or him. It ſeems from the Stories we have of Chriſt's Appearance, that a Notion of Bodies raiſed again, being capable of going thro' Stones, Walls, and Doors, without injuring the paſſing or paſſive Body, was then current among the *Jews*. For, tho' this be impoſſible to Nature, yet 'tis an Article of Goſpel Faith, That *with God all Things are poſſible*; therefore ſome believe that Abſurdities and Contradictions are poſſible to the Power of God; that he can raiſe up Children from the Loins of *Abraham* out of the Stones of the Streets!

To ſum the Matter up, here are ſeveral Parts amazingly acted, and worthy of Remark.

1*ſt*, That the Diſciples of Jeſus ſhould hear him, five Times, tell them plainly, he would riſe again from the Dead the third Day, or after the third Day; yet not underſtand, remember, know, believe nor expect it!

The Prophecy of Jeſus concerning his riſing again was ſo far from being publicly known to all *Jeruſalem*, that the Diſciples did not know it. For all the Evangeliſts ſhew, that a Reſurrection was what they did not expect: Then how ſhould any Body elſe

know

know it? And, if ſuch Prophecy was not known, how ſhould the Sepulchre be ſealed and watched? 'Tis ſtrange, that it ſhould be ſeveral Times plainly foretold to the Diſciples alone, yet none expected it but thoſe who never heard of it, whilſt they that did had no Expectation of it!

2*d*, That the Body of Jeſus ſhould be laid in the Grave with Spices as the manner of the *Jews* is to bury their Dead, yet that the *Jew* Rulers who ſaw this, being terrified by a Prophecy they had never heard, ſhould order the Grave to be watched leſt the Body ſhould riſe again, or the Diſciples of Jeſus frighten them, by telling the People he was riſen!

3*d*, That the Women, who ſaw the Body of Jeſus laid in the Sepulchre with Spices, ſhould go two Days after, to do that which they ſaw had been done before!

4*th*, That an Angel ſhould impolitickly frighten away the Watch before Jeſus came out of the Sepulchre, ſo that they could be no Witneſſes of his Reſurrection, who would have been the moſt proper Perſons. A Reſurrection in the Dark, ſeen by neither Friends, Foes, nor indifferent Spectators! For the Watchmen went away before, and the Women came after all was over.

5*th*, That the Guard at the Sepulchre ſhould be terrified almoſt to Death, with aſtoniſhing Wonders, and the High Prieſts and Rulers believe them, yet theſe Things ſhould have no more Effect upon them than if they had not believed them, or as if nothing wonderful had happened.

6*th*, That St. *Matthew* (p. 42.) *ſhould be admitted as an Evidence in a Court, to prove a Fact where he was abſent.* That he ſhould know what the Watch felt, and ſaw, before thoſe that went to the Sepulchre ſaw the Watch; and what the Rulers did in their privy Council! For if they bribed the Soldiers to ſpread a falſe Report, and they ſpread it; no doubt, they bribed them to keep Counſel too, and they kept it.

I NOW proceed to ſhew how thoſe that are called *Witneſſes* agree in their Evidence. Which falls under,

The third Period of Time (p. 88.) where *the Evidence the Evangeliſts gave the World for this Fact is the main Conſideration.* If theſe will not hold good, 'twill be in vain to plead the Proofs the Apoſtles gave beſides. If one Miracle requires to be ſupported by another, there is always a Reaſon for Miracles; and if the Credit depends on this Support, when ſuch Support falls, the Credit muſt fall with it.

The four Evangeliſts are called *Witneſſes* of the Reſurrection, and the other New Teſtament Writers are eſteemed of equal Credit; their Teſtimony of his Appearances, after he is ſaid to be riſen, is to be conſidered and compared; whereby the Truth of the Fact will appear, as their Teſtimonies of it agree. But as Ideas, when compounded, are generally perplexed: I will therefore diſtinguiſh the Accounts of theſe Hiſtorians into ſeparate Articles; and as they mention in general but three *Appearances* of Jeſus, I ſhall conſider theſe particularly in order, afterwards all the reſt.

The *Appearances* of Jeſus after his reported Reſurrection, are,

1*ſt*, To *Mary Magdalene*, mentioned by three Evangeliſts.

2*dly*, To *Simon* and *Cleopas*, mentioned by St. *Mark* and St. *Luke*.

3*dly*, To the eleven Apoſtles, mentioned by all four.

4*thly*, The other Appearances, mentioned by St. *John* and St. *Paul*.

5*thly*, I ſhall examine concerning Jeſus's *Aſcenſion*.

I. *Of the firſt Appearance of Jeſus Chriſt which was to Mary Magdalene.*

Here are to be conſidered,

1. *The Perſons.*

St. *Matthew* ſays, (*v.* 1 & 9.) Jeſus appeared to *Mary Magdalene* and the other *Mary*.

St. *Mary* (*v.* 9.) and St. *John* (*v.* 10. & 14.) mention *Mary Magdalene* only.

2. *The Place and Time.*

St. *Matthew* ſays, (*v.* 9.) after the two *Marys* had been at the Sepulchre, and were returning to tell the Diſciples the News, Jeſus met them by the Way.

St. *John* ſays, (*v.* 2, 10, 11.) after *Mary Magdalene* had been at the Sepulchre, and had ran and told the Diſciples the News there, and came again to the Sepulchre, ſhe then ſaw Jeſus and the Angels there.

3. *The Manner.*

St. *Matthew* ſays, (*v.* 9.) the *Marys* held Jeſus by the Feet.

St. *John* ſays, (*v.* 17.) Jeſus forbad *Mary* to touch him.

4. *The Meſſage.*

St. *Matthew* ſays, (*v.* 10.) that Jeſus bade the *Marys* tell the Diſciples he was going to *Galilee*.

St. *John* ſays, (*v.* 17.) that Jeſus bade *Mary* tell the Diſciples he was going to his Father.

So that theſe *Witneſſes* do not agree whether Jeſus appeared to one Woman only, or to two. Whether it was in their Way, as they were going to tell the Diſciples; or at the Sepulchre after the Diſciples had been told what had been there diſcovered. Whether Jeſus was held by the Feet, or whether he would not ſuffer himſelf to be touched. Whether he ſent Word to his Diſciples, that he was going to *Galilee*, or going to Heaven.

St. *Matthew*, St. *Mark*, and St. *John*, only agree, that *Mary Magdalene* ſaid ſhe ſaw Jeſus; but in no other Circumſtance. Nor do any of theſe Witneſſes inſinuate two Appearances of Jeſus to *Mary Magdalene*. There is therefore no Authority to make them two; yet, to avoid theſe Diſagreements, Neceſſity may drive ſome to endeavour it, as the Gentleman does, (p. 66.) that thereby, if it be poſſible, they may reconcile theſe Abſurdities which prove the Story wrong. However, it will not prove theirs right, if they recede from the Text.

St. *Luke*, who gives a particular Account of the Women, and what paſſed between them and the Angels, ſays (*v.* 23.) that his Body they found not; but, if they had ſeen him alive or dead, they muſt have found or ſeen his Body; therefore, according to St. *Luke*, they ſaw him not. What confirms this to be St. *Luke*'s Meaning,

They found not his Body dead nor alive, is plain by what follows.

Concerning St. Peter *and St.* John.

Whoſe going to the Sepulchre is related by St. *Luke* and St. *John*. St. *Luke* ſays, (*v.* 12.) that *Peter*, and peradventure *John*, went to the Sepulchre, but *Him*, that is, Jeſus, they ſaw not. And by what St. *John* himſelf relates, (*v.* 24.) they neither ſaw Jeſus nor Angels. By St. *Luke* it appears, that the Men were at the Sepulchre after the Angels were gone: But by St. *John*, that they were before the Angels came. If it ſhould be affirmed, that St. *Luke* means by (*v.* 24.) that the Men ſaw the Angels, there is nothing in St. *John* can bear that Meaning; therefore either the Men did not ſee the Angels, or the Witneſſes do not agree in their Evidence about it. As the Angel's Meſſage in St. *Mark*, (*v.* 7.) particularly and expreſly mentioned *Peter*, would they not have delivered that Meſſage to him perſonally, if they had been there when he came? If Jeſus, and the Angel, or Angels, were at the Sepulchre as well after as before *Peter* and *John* were there, why then did they withdraw upon their coming, who ran where Jeſus muſt needs firſt be, as ſoon as they heard that either his Body was not found, or that he was riſen again? Why did the Angels tell the Women to tell the Diſciples, to meet Jeſus in *Galilee*, and not tell *Peter* and *John* themſelves, if they were at the Sepulchre before the Angels went away?

But there is as little Harmony among the Witneſſes about the Angels at the Sepulchre, as there is among them about the Appearances of Jeſus; for St. *Matthew* mentions only one Angel, (*v.* 2, 3, 4, 5.)

St. *Mark* calls him a young Man, (*v.* 5.)

St. *Luke* ſays, two Men, (*v.* 4.) but the Women called them Angels, (*v.* 23.)

St. *John* calls them two Angels, (*v.* 12.)

This Appearance of Jeſus to *Mary Magdalene*, delivered in our Goſpels, the Diſciples themſelves did not believe, (*Mark*, *v.* 11.) nor indeed that they ſaw Angels, (*Luke*, *v.* 11.) and confeſs that *Mary* herſelf did not know whether it was Jeſus or the Gardener, (*John*, *v.* 14.)

Mr. *B.* ſays, (page 66, 67,) that the Words, *Touch me not*, do not infer, that Chriſt's Body was not ſuch an one as would bear the Touch; and that, *I am not yet aſcended to my Father*, ſignifies, *I go not yet to my Father*, although he grants *there is a Difficulty in theſe Words, and it may be hard to give the true Senſe of them; but that there is no Difficulty in ſeeing that they have no Relation to the Nature of Chriſt's Body, for of his Body nothing is ſaid.* If the Words, *Touch* ME *not*, did not ſignify, *Touch not my Body*, what did they ſignify? For the Word *me*, muſt mean his Perſon; if his Body had now no Relation to his Perſon, it was a Spirit. I need not give any forced Conſtructions to Scripture to make Differences appear, as others do to reconcile them. Whether Jeſus could not, or would not be touched, I'll not pretend to ſay; one it muſt be: If he could not, it was no real Body;

if he would not be touched, he would not permit her to have a Proof that it was.

II. *Of Chriſt's ſecond Appearance, which was to two Diſciples.*

Concerning this Appearance. The Story goes, That Jeſus met two of his Diſciples upon the Road, walked and talked with them a long Time; and, as ſoon as they apprehended they knew him, he vaniſhed. Their Names were *Cleopas* and *Simon*, who, I ſuppoſe, was *Simon Peter*; becauſe St. *Paul* ſays, he appeared firſt to *Cephas*, then to the Twelve, beſides to another *Simon* of leſs Note; the Goſpel-writers always added ſome Mark of Diſtinction, as *Simon* the *Canaanite*. Now, that *Simon Peter*, who ſeems to be one of the two, who knew him perfectly well before his Death, ſhould not know him as well afterwards, is ſtrange. 'Tis very improbable, that he who well knew his Perſon and Voice, having been ſo conſtantly converſant with him, and who had no longer than three Days before, eat, drank, and prayed with him, and fought for him, ſhould now walk with him a conſiderable Way, and hear him Diſcourſe a conſiderable Time, and not know him; that Jeſus ſhould thus appear to two Diſciples, and not be known, is all one as to appear and not appear at the ſame Time.

Object. *But he appeared to them in another Form*, (Mark, *v.* 12.)

Anſw. Whatever Form that was, if it was his real Perſon that appeared, the Form of that Perſon was the ſame; and Cloaths could not ſo far diſguiſe him to one: hat was ſo intimately acquainted with him. If his countenance was altered, 'tis very ſtrange, that the Power which raiſed him from the Dead, that he might be known, ſhould alter the Form of his Face or Perſon ſo much, that he could not be known: Or that the Power, which raiſed him again to Life, ſhould not reſtore his Complexion, that thoſe might know him to whom he appeared to be known. If Jeſus was reſtored to Life, but they not to the Knowledge of him, he was raiſed again to no Purpoſe.

Object. *But their Eyes were holden that they ſhould not know him*, (*Luke*, *v.* 16.)

Anſw. Then ſome myſterious Power had ſpoiled their Eye-ſight, and he came to make himſelf known to them in ſuch a manner, that they ſhould not know him. One imagines, the Cauſe that theſe two Diſciples knew him not, was in the *Object*; he appeared to them in another Form than uſual: Another conceives it was in their *Eyes*, and done on Purpoſe: *Their Eyes were holden, that they ſhould not know him.*

Object *But they knew him afterwards.*

Anſw. How can we be ſure they did not miſtake at laſt, and thought it was Jeſus, when it was not? What Proof had they, or do they give us of it? When they thought it was Chriſt, he diſappeared. Is it proper to call theſe *Eye-witneſſes*, (p. 68.) that could not ſee clearly by Day-light? Why did not Jeſus ſtay long enough to make them ſufficiently ſenſible by ſuch Demonſtration, that their Report of it might convince the other Diſciples?

ciples? If it was a Stranger that put a Trick upon them, he took his Opportunity to leave them when he found they were deceived in thinking him to be Jeſus; leſt, by ſtaying longer than was neceſſary, they ſhould be undeceived.

Can any good Reaſon be given, why Jeſus did not diſcover himſelf to them by the Way, and give them the Joy which ſuch Diſcovery would have made? This is ſuch an Appearance, as gave them Surprize, Perplexity, and Pain, rather than certain Proof, real Evidence, Pleaſure and Joy.

They reported, that the Lord is riſen indeed, and hath appeared to *Simon*. This ſeems as if it did not appear to be the Lord to *Cleopas*, but to *Simon* only; for they relate no other Appearance, but what had juſt before happened, the Relation of which St. *Matthew* and St. *John* make no Mention of; the Reaſon may be, that they either knew nothing of it, or did not believe it; for St. *Mark* ſays, (*v.* 13.) that, when it was told to the other Diſciples, they did not believe it. Why ſhould Jeſus thus appear to theſe two Diſciples? Why did he thus Play at Hide-and-ſeek with them? What End did it Anſwer? Or what Good did it produce? A wiſe or good Being always propoſes ſome wiſe or good End to be anſwered; but what Wiſdom or Goodneſs appeared in this, or was it productive of?

Mr. *B.* in Defence of this Appearance, aſks (p. 67, 68.) What is *there unnatural or uncommon in this Account? Two Men*, ſays he, *meet an Acquaintance, whom they thought dead; they converſe with him for ſome Time without ſuſpecting who he was*, &c. tho' he was the Perſon their whole Diſcourſe was about; and he talked about himſelf all the Way, yet they had no Suſpicion who he was. He adds, *The very Perſuaſion they were under, that he was dead, contributed greatly to their not knowing him.* What Notion had they then of his predicting his Reſurrection? 'Tis ſtrange that they who knew him ſo well, and converſed with him ſo familiarly but a few Days ago, ſhould be ſo much at a Loſs to know him now when he was walking and talking with them. *Beſides*, ſays Mr. *B. he appeared to them on a Journey, and walked with them Side by Side, in which Situation no one of the Company has a full View of the other. Afterwards when they were at Supper together, and Lights brought in, they plainly diſcerned who he was.* How can we know, that in walking along the Road, they did not look him in the Face? Or that Lights were brought into the Room where they were eating? If they were, are Complexions beſt diſtinguiſhed by Candle-light? So that it ſtill remains a Queſtion, *viz. What ſort of Witneſſes are theſe; Eye-witneſſes? No: Before Supper they were Eye-witneſſes that the Perſon whom they ſaw was not Chriſt; what Reaſon then is there for our rejecting the Evidence of their Senſe, when* they ſay *they did not know Chriſt, and of inſiſting on it when* they ſay *they did?* If theſe two Diſciples were ſo incurious, as not to look in his Face in the open Road and Day-light, did they not know his Voice? Did Jeſus counterfeit that too? If he appeared purpoſely to be konwn,

why did he appear ſo as they ſhould not know him? If he appeared not to be known, why did he take away the Cloud from their Eyes, and let them know him at all? If they ſaw thro' a falſe Medium at firſt, how do we know but they did the ſame at laſt? Are theſe Perſons fit to be depended on as Eye-witneſſes, whoſe Eyes could be deceived? *Their Eyes were holden that they ſhould not know him.* All the Knowledge they pretend to of him, was but little, and ſtaid but a little while; a little Matter confounded it; as ſoon as they knew, or thought they knew him, he gave them the Slip, and they loſt him again. Jeſus was gone, and they knew not how, nor where. Is this a real Proof? Or a Proof of a real Body?

Mr. *B.* then relates a Story as a parallel Caſe, (*p.* 68.) of a Traveller that had been *ſome Years Abroad, and in his Return to* England, *thro'* Paris, *happened to meet his Siſter there, that they, not expecting to ſee each other, converſed together with other Company, at a public Houſe, for a great Part of the Day before ſhe diſcovered who he was.* But this is no more a parallel Caſe, than ſome Years are to two or three Days.

III. *Of the third Appearance of Jeſus which was to all the Apoſtles.*

When *Simon* and *Cleopas* conceived, that the Perſon who had been talking to them was Jeſus, and immediately loſt Sight of him, they roſe up the ſame Hour (ſays St. *Luke*) * returned to *Jeruſalem*, found the other Diſciples together in a Room, and told them of it. And that while they were telling them, Jeſus himſelf, to convince them of the Truth of it, appeared among them, and ſtood in the midſt. He got to *Jeruſalem* as ſoon as they, and it ſeems was not far off from them when they firſt entered, and might have been there before, if their Eyes were holden that they ſhould not ſee him, or if he appeared among them in another Form.

The Evidence of this Appearance of Jeſus to the Apoſtles, on which *the Faith of the World is to reſt*, is worthy of our Regard.

St. *Matthew*, St. *Mark*, and St. *Luke* agree, that when the Diſciples were made acquainted with the Reſurrection of Jeſus, they met him for the firſt and laſt Time. But this St. *John*, the Author of the *Acts*, and St. *Paul*, contradict; for they tell us of other Appearances afterwards.

St. *Matthew* (*v.* 7 & 10,) and St. *Mark* (*v.* 7,) ſay, the Diſciples had Orders to meet Jeſus at *Galilee*; but St. *Luke* (*v.* 49,) and the Author of the *Acts*, (*v.* 4,) ſay, the Diſciples had Orders not to depart from *Jeruſalem*. St. *Luke* tell us (*v.* 6, 7, 8,) that the Men, or Angels, only reminded the Women of what Jeſus ſaid when he was in *Galilee*, that he there foretold his Death and Reſurrection; and that when they were thus put in Mind of it, they remembered his words. Whatever it was that Jeſus ſaid to his Diſciples in *Galilee*, St. *Mark* and St. *Luke* both confeſs that the Diſciples did not underſtand him, how then ſhould they remember? If it was a plain Prophecy, as St. *Matthew* (xvii. 22, 23,) and St. *Mark* (ix. 31.) have it, I think, 'tis ſcarce probable or poſſible they ſhould forget. If it

it was myſterious, as St. *Luke* (ix. 44,) has it, they could not underſtand it. A myſterious Prediction, which is not underſtood till the Thing predicted comes to paſs, is the ſame as no Prediction, and ſuch an one is that in St. *John* (ii. 19, 20, 21, 22,) underſtood neither by the Apoſtles nor the *Jews*, to whom it was ſpoken. Such Prophecy lies not in the Words ſpoken, but in the Interpretation. The Expounder, not the Speaker, makes the Prophecy.

As to this laſt Appearance of Jeſus, St. *Matthew* diſagrees with St. *Luke*, both as to *Time* and *Place*; for St. *Matthew* ſays, it was at a Mountain in *Galilee*, where Jeſus had appointed them; therefore the Diſciples could not be there on the Evening of the Day he aroſe, the neareſt Part of *Galilee* being, if I miſtake not, not above threeſcore Miles from *Jeruſalem*, where this Appearance was, according to St. *Luke*, who ſays, *he aſcended on the Evening of the Reſurrection Day*. For (*v.* 1.) on the firſt Day of the Week, early in the Morning, the Women went to the Sepulchre, when they returned, (*v.* 12,) *Peter* went thither; the ſame Day, (*v.* 13,) two of them went to *Emmaus*; towards the Evening, (*v.* 28, 29,) they got thither; they turned back the ſame Hour they got there, (*v.* 33,) and went to *Jeruſalem*, where they found the Apoſtles together, to whom *Jeſus* appeared as they were telling what had happened, led them out to *Bethany*, and from thence aſcended to Heaven. If St. *Matthew* had told us of Jeſus's Aſcenſion, and St. *Luke* not, it might have been luckily reconciled; but the contrary has unfortunately happened. The Author of the *Acts* ſays, that *Jeſus* was with the Apoſtles *forty* Days, St. *Luke* only *one* Day. Now, could this Author be St. *Luke*, which ſo contradicts St. *Luke*? If it be not, the Author of the Acts of the Apoſtles is not known; and 'tis well if the Authors of the four Goſpels are better known.

St. *John* agrees with St. *Luke*, that Jeſus appeared to his Diſciples on the Evening of the firſt Day of the Week; and, by the Circumſtances, this Appearance was at *Jeruſalem*, though he does not mention the Place; but St. *John* diſagrees with the other three, in not making it the *laſt*, and the *only one* to the Apoſtles; they ſay the *Eleven* were gathered together; he ſays *Thomas* one of the Eleven was abſent, ſo that there were but *ten* of them. That *Thomas* being afterwards told of it, declared, (*v.* 25.) he would not believe, except he ſaw the Print of the Nails in his Hands, and felt the Wound in his Side. Tho' this is what none of the others mention, and contradicts their Evidence. St. *John* acquaints us, (*v.* 26.) that, after eight Days, the Diſciples were together, and *Thomas* was with them, when *Jeſus* appeared to gratify this Infidel, bade him feel of his Hands and his Side, and believe; which we do not read he did, but believed upon Sight. Concerning which ſome Things occur worthy of Remark.

1*ſt*, St. *Thomas*'s Infidelity and Faith were very extraordinary. He would not believe that Jeſus was riſen from the Dead, except

he ſaw and felt the Wounds that cauſed his Death. It is to be ſuppoſed, that the Power which raiſed him to Life did not cure thoſe Wounds? Or was not Jeſus to be known without them by his own Diſciples? Had they forgot the Idea of his Perſon and the Sound of his Voice in ſo ſhort a Time? If theſe Marks were only Prints or Scars of Wounds in his Hands and Side, could not another Perſon, who might have a Mind to deceive, make Scars in thoſe Places, or the Appearance of ſuch Wounds? Were theſe Prints better to be known than the Form of his Perſon, which they had ſo often ſeen?

2*dly*, One of theſe *Marks* was that of *the Wound in his Side*, by which I ſuppoſe, St. *John*, * refers to the Wound given him by a Soldier with a Spear before he was taken down from the Croſs, which none of the other Evangeliſts mention; yet, if St. *Thomas* and the other Apoſtles did not know it as well as St. *John*, it was no Proof to them that it was the Perſon of Jeſus. But, if they did, why do none of them neither tell us of the Fact, nor of theſe Words that refer to it? St. *Luke* has it, (*v.* 40.) Behold my *Hands* and my *Feet*; not a Word of his *Side*. But, becauſe no other Evangeliſt reports this but St. *John*, *you have his Word for the Truth of it.* (P. 12.) Leſt it ſhould be doubted of, he ſays †, *And he that ſaw it bare Record, and his Record is true, and he knoweth that he ſaith true, that ye might believe.* Beſides, St. *John* makes this to fulfil a Scripture Prophecy, ‡ *They ſhall look on him whom they have pierced.* Therefore it muſt be true. Yet, if this ſingle Action be doubted of, it may be a Doubt whether he was dead when he was taken down from the Croſs; for, when *Joſeph* begged his Body, *Pilate* marvelled if he were already dead; § his Legs were not broken to haſten or compleat his Death as the others were, ‖ and he was taken down by *Joſeph* himſelf. If it be doubted, whether Jeſus was really dead when he was put into the Sepulchre, which was a Cave hewn out of a Rock; it will be Matter of leſs Doubt, whether he roſe again? And why he aroſe in the Night? Why his Countenance was ſo much altered, that his Diſciples ſcarce knew him but by his Wounds? Why he did not appear afterwards in Public, but to his Diſciples only, &c. Add to this, that a healthful ſober young Man, with vigorous Spirits, does not eaſily part with Life, by Wounds in the extreme Parts.

3*dly*, As the Satisfaction, that St. *Thomas* required to cure him of his Infidelity, was extraordinary; ſo was his Faith. When Jeſus appeared in the Midſt of them the ſecond Time, when the Doors were ſhut, and *ſhewed to* Thomas *his Hands and his Side*, &c. Thomas cried out, *My Lord and my God!* If this be a Confeſſion of that Faith, which is Truth, then the human Perſon of Jeſus was Lord and God, as the *Muggletonians* ſay; and then they are right, who ſay, God was born, God

* John xix. 34. † xix. 35. ‡ *v.* 37. § Mark xv. 44.
‖ John xix. 32, 33.

God died, and God roſe again from the Dead. Tho' St. *Thomas* be condemned for not believing, 'tis not ſaid that he had the Proof of the Identity of his Maſter's real Perſon, but rather ſeems to have believed without. A true Faith in the Reſurrection, rejects the Evidence of Senſe: * *Bleſſed are they that have not ſeen, and yet have believed.*

4*thly*, I obſerved before, that, according to St. *John*, this was the *ſecond Time Jeſus had appeared in the Midſt of his Diſciples when the Doors were ſhut*; where it is ſuggeſted, that one ſolid or material Body paſſed through another ſolid or material Body, without injuring the Form of either, both the paſſing and paſſive Body remaining the ſame, contrary to all the Laws of Nature. As for what Explanation Mr. *B.* has given to this, (p. 70.) that, perhaps, Jeſus opened the Door, and took his Opportunity to come upon them unſeen, or in the Dark; and tread ſoftly too, he ſhould have ſaid, or while they were aſleep. This is only a palliating Expoſition, and not warranted by the Text, which naturally ſeems to ſuggeſt the contrary: Therefore there is no Proof that ſuch is the true Intent and Meaning of the Evangeliſts, concerning the ſudden appearing and diſappearing of Jeſus. The manner of which was ſo uncommon and ſurprizing, † that the Diſciples themſelves thought they ſaw a Spirit, and were affrighted with it. This ideal Appearance ſeems to have been raiſed by the Story of *Simon* and *Cleopas*. But whether 'twas real or imaginary, it reſts upon the Evidence only of St. *John*, one of the Diſciples preſent; for St. *Matthew*'s Account of the Meeting of Jeſus, and the Diſciples, does not agree with it. St. *Mark* and *Luke* were none of the Eleven, therefore not preſent: It may be a Queſtion, whether the other Nine out of the Eleven fancied they ſaw this Apparition. *But he ſhewed them his Hands and his Side, or his Feet:* Were the Wounds in them a more real Proof than his real Preſence? Yet all theſe could ſcarce induce them to believe. For, ‡ *while they believed not for Joy, and wondered, he ſaid unto them, Have you here any Meat?* He was forced to convince them, that his Body was real, by eating. Why might not their Eyes be holden here too, and he ſeem to eat before them, when he did not? In common Caſes, Men may be allowed to be Eye-witneſſes, and to ſee what they ſee; but, in uncommon and miraculous Caſes, this hardly can be allowed: For when I have to do with one who has the Power of working Miracles, my Senſes may be miraculouſly wrought upon. In ſuch Caſe, I may and ought to Queſtion as much the Truth of my Senſes, as the Object, that I am neither deceived in the one, nor the other. Common Jugglers, by the Art of *Legerdemain*, who cannot change the Nature of Things, can deceive my Sight; which it is eaſier to do, than to work a real Change in Things. The Evidence of any Eye-witneſſes then, beſides our own, cannot be depended upon, for ſcarcely can

* John xx. 29. † Luke xxiv. 37. ‡ Luke v. 41.

can we depend upon our own; ſince ſuch a Power may deceive us in ſpite of our Eyes. He, that can alter Nature, can deſtroy all Rules of Truth and Certainty. Well, but has the Gentleman, by all that he has ſaid, proved the Reality of Chriſt's Body after his Reſurrection? No, that's impoſſible, unleſs he could ſhew, that *there was nothing miraculous in the greateſt Miracle that ever was*, and every real Miracle is an Abſurdity to common Senſe and Underſtanding, and contrary to the Attributes of God, notwithſtanding all that is ſaid in Favour of the Poſſibility of them, from Page 60 to 65, becauſe it breaks down the Boundaries and Laws of Nature, which are the only Rules of Truth and Certainty to Mankind.

In Favour of the Reality of Chriſt's Body in theſe Appearances, ſays Mr. *B.* p. 71. *I wonder the Gentleman did not carry his Argument a little further, and prove that Chriſt, before his Death, had no real Body; for we read that, when the Multitude would have thrown him down a Precipice, he went through the Midſt of them unſeen.* The Word *unſeen* is not in the Text, *but he paſſing through the Midſt of them, went his Way* *; where only a little Removal of his Body in the Crowd might ſecure him among his Friends; yet, he ſays, that *nothing happened after his Reſurrection more unaccountable than this that happened before it*, and that *Difference there is none*. Whereas this, as it is worded in the Text, carries with it great Probability, and nothing wonderful; but the other, an utter Impoſſibility, that one ſolid Body ſhould paſs through another, yet neither the Form nor Subſtance of either be altered. It is not in that, as in this, ſaid, *he vaniſhed out of their Sight*, or *ceaſed to be ſeen of them*, or *that their Eyes were holden that they ſhould not know him*, or that *he appeared to them in another Form*, or *appeared in the Midſt of a Room when the Doors were ſhut*.

Let us now conſider, 4*thly*, of the other Appearances mentioned by St. *John* and St. *Paul*.

St. *John* tells us of more Appearances of Jeſus to his Diſciples, than the other Evangeliſts do, and after *they* ſay he aſcended, or took his laſt Leave of them; it is ſufficient therefore to ſay of St. *John*'s Evidence, that his deſtroys theirs, or theirs deſtroy his.

St. *Paul* writes by Hearſay; he only delivered what he received; therefore he, who was as one born out of due Time, can be no proper Evidence to teſtify of Things done before he was born. After Chriſt's Appearance to *Cephas*, (I ſuppoſe it may be that to *Simon* and *Cleopas*) St. *Paul* ſays, he was ſeen of the Twelve: Query, Was *Judas* there to make up the Number? The particular Viſit paid to St. *James* we have no Account of; for theſe, therefore, we ought to have St. *Peter* and St. *James*'s own Evidence; theſe may be wiſhed for, St. *Paul*'s being of little Account; for, as St. *Paul* ſaw Jeſus only in a Viſion, he ſeems to be in his Viſions about his Relation of Jeſus's Appearances. He agrees with the reſt, as the reſt agree with one another. The five hundred Brethren, he ſays, Chriſt appeared

* Luke iv. 29, 30.

appeared to, are all lumped together, and might as eaſily have been five Thouſand, and as hard to prove or diſprove the one as the other. Therefore, ſome Evidence being neceſſary to corroborate it, what he ſays, *Gal.* i. 20, ſhould follow here. Where and when was this public Appearance? And how long did it continue? Since, St. *Paul* ſays, ſome of the Witneſſes were fallen aſleep, he ſhould have told us who, and how many of them were then broad awake; for Prophets were ſubject to dream, and ſometimes to dream waking.

I come now, 5*thly*, to my laſt Point propoſed, To conſider of the Aſcenſion of Jeſus, concerning which, they alſo diſagree.

St. *Mark* and St. *Luke* acquaint us, that after Jeſus had appeared to the Eleven as they ſat at Meat, and had ſpoken unto them, he aſcended into Heaven. St. *Luke* ſays, he led them out as far as *Bethany*, lift up his Hands and bleſſed them, and, while he was ſo doing, he was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven. The Author of the *Acts* ſays, that when Jeſus had done ſpeaking to the Diſciples, while they beheld, he was taken up; and they returning afteward from Mount *Olivet* to *Jeruſalem*, it is to be ſuppoſed, he intimates, that *Jeſus* aſcended from thence, which either belonged to *Bethany*, or was very near it. As to the Place of his Aſcenſion, if St. *Mark* means *Galilee*, he contradicts theſe. If he means the ſame Place as theſe do, he contradicts himſelf; for he ſays, (*v.* 7.) the Angel, or young Man, told them Jeſus was gone before the Diſciples into *Galilee*, and there they ſhould ſee him. The Author of the *Acts* ſays, *he was taken up while they beheld, and a Cloud received him out of their Sight*: But *Mark*, as if Heaven itſelf was open to his View, without any intercepting Cloud, that, *he was received up into Heaven, and ſat on the right Hand of God*; as if he had looked into Heaven itſelf, and ſeen him ſeated.

St. *Matthew* and St. *John*, who were two of the Apoſtles, and therefore ſhould be thoſe that ſaw his Aſcenſion, ſeem to ſay, that he never aſcended; at leaſt, they mention nothing of it. And, according to them, it is a Queſtion, whether he is gone yet. The laſt Words of *Jeſus* in St. *Matthew* are, (*v.* 20.) *Lo, I am with you always unto the End of the World.* *John* leaves us at all Uncertainties, and ſays, that *Jeſus* went like a wandering *Jew*, without bidding them farewel, the Lord knows where*! as if they intended, whenever they pleaſed, to bring him on the Stage again. Some are Infidels enough to inſinuate, that the laſt Verſe of St. *John*'s Goſpel ſhews, that he loved romancing ſo well, as to give all Room and Encouragement imaginable to others to practiſe it, (*viz.*) *And there are many other Things that* Jeſus *did, the which, if they ſhould be written, every one, I ſuppoſe, that even the World itſelf could not contain the Books that ſhould be written. Amen.* As if it were an everlaſting Fund for Romance.

Obſerve the Agreement of the Witneſſes on this Appearance to all the Apoſtles, which was doubted of by the Apoſtles themſelves,† upon which

* John xxi. 19, 20, 21, 22. † See Matt. *v.* 17.

which depends all the Proof we have of the Reſurrection of *Jeſus*. St. *Matthew*, St. *Mark*, and St. *Luke* mention this Appearance as the firſt and laſt Time; St. *John* and St. *Paul* ſay, it was not the laſt; St. *Matthew* and St. *Mark* ſay, the Diſciples were ordered to go to *Galilee*; St. *Luke* and the Author of the *Acts* ſay, that they were ordered to ſtay at *Jeruſalem*.

St. *Matthew* ſays, *Jeſus* met the Diſciples for the firſt and laſt Time at a Mountain in *Galilee*; St. *Luke*, that it was at *Jeruſalem*.

St. *Luke* intimates, that this laſt Meeting was on the Evening of the Day he aroſe. But this could be if it was at *Galilee*: St. *John* ſays, he appeared afterwards: The Author of the *Acts*, that *Jeſus* was with them forty Days.

St. *Luke* acquaints us, that this Appearance was to the Eleven Apoſtles; St. *John*, that 'twas only to Ten of them; St. *Paul* ſays, 'twas to the Twelve; perhaps, he had forgot that one of them was fallen aſleep.

St. *Mark*, St. *Luke*, and the Author of the *Acts* ſay, that *Jeſus* aſcended; *John* does not ſay, that he ever aſcended at all; St. *Matthew* ſays, he promiſed to be with them to the End of the World.

St. *Matthew* and St. *Luke* mention but two Appearances of *Jeſus*, and in both theſe they differ. St. *Mark* tells us of three; St. *John* of four; St. *Paul* of ſix; the Author of the *Acts*, I think, ſhould mean forty, by the Words being ſeen of them forty Days, unleſs *Jeſus* was any of thoſe Days inviſible.

The Evangeliſts tell us of but a very few that ſaw *Jeſus* after his Reſurrection; the Author of the *Acts* ſays, as the Gentleman ſuppoſes, that 120 were Witneſſes of his Appearance. St. *Paul* tells us, that he was ſeen of above 500 Brethren at one Time. Thus the Saints agree, and ſuch Agreement is common among Saints. Their Miracles, Morals, Doctrines, and Practices are alike harmonious.

Now permit me to query, Whether the Author of the Trial, or any Man who has read thus far, (p. 4.) *conſidering the Nature of the Evidence, and its proper Weight, would be willing to determine a Property of five Shillings upon ſuch Evidence as this*, which is thought material enough to ſupport the Reſurrection of Chriſt? For the Witneſſes, as they are called, do not all agree in any one Circumſtance; but palpably contradict one another in every Particular. I wonder what Harmony all the Evengeliſts would make that were in the firſt Ages of the Church, compared with one another, ſeeing the Four we have are ſo harmonious? And whether (p. 14.) *the general and conſtant Belief of the Reſurrection* is not that only which *creates in moſt Minds a Preſumption, that it was founded on good Evidence?* And whether (p. 15.) *the very Account, given by the pretended Witneſſes of this Fact, is not ſufficient to deſtroy the Credit of it?* The four Evengeliſts, together with the Author of the *Acts*, and St. *Paul*, are all Authors of equal Credit, therefore are all called in for Witneſſes. In carnal Caſes Men are not allowed to be Witneſſes of ſeeing an Object without carnal Eyes, and natural Conviction;

viction; but this being a ſpiritual Caſe, in which Men *walk by Faith, and not by Sight*, ſpiritual Imagination is to go for ocular Demonſtration, and the Proof of the Spirit is an infallible Proof! The *many infallible Proofs by which* Jeſus *ſhewed himſelf alive after his Paſſion*, have been ſhewn. In other Caſes, if the Witneſſes do not agree, their Evidence proves nothing; but, in Matters of Faith, Men have *the Witneſs in themſelves*; *for Faith is the Evidence of Things not ſeen.* Therefore nothing which has here been ſaid ought to be conſtrued to overturn or effect the Faith of the Goſpel, but to ſhew the miraculous Nature and wonderful Power of Faith; that it can *remove all theſe Mountains*, and ſwallow them up, as if they were *caſt into the Sea.* Since the Chriſtian Faith is ſo powerful, what needs it any human Support from the civil Magiſtrate. *If it be of God, Man cannot overthrow it.* The Faith, which requires human Power to ſupport it, diſcovers much of human Weakneſs in its Compoſition.

'Tis true, indeed, that the Evidence of the three Appearances of *Jeſus* ſhews, that there is no Agreement in the firſt, no Certainty in the ſecond, and no Harmony in the third: What then! Such Inconſiſtencies, Improbabilities, Abſurdities, and Contradictions, would deſtroy the Credit of other Hiſtory, but the Faith of this is founded on a Rock; the Rock of Education, which Reaſon cannot penetrate; the Faithful following the Example of their ſpiritual Patterns, to offer up their own Sons, or themſelves, that is, all their natural Endowments and human Wiſdom on the Altar of Faith.

Wiſe Infidels will exclaim againſt theſe *Arcana* of a Religion, to introduce and maintain which, ſo much Blood and Treaſure has been every where ſpilt and ſpent in Abundance; and they will imagine, that 'till theſe Things are reconciled and cleared up, *the Evidence will be thought inſufficient to ſupport the Credit of ſuch extraordinary Events*: But let them exclaim: *For it is written, I will deſtroy the Wiſdom of the Wiſe, and bring to nothing the Underſtanding of the Prudent. Where is the Wiſe? Where is the Scribe? Where is the Diſputer of this World? Hath not God made fooliſh the Wiſdom of this World by the Fooliſhneſs of preaching the Goſpel? For the* Jews *require a Sign, and the* Greeks *ſeek after Wiſdom*; *but we, ſaith St.* Paul, *preach Chriſt Crucified*, and riſen again; *to the* Jews *a Stumbling-block, and to the* Greeks *Fooliſhneſs.* 1 Cor. i.

HAVING examin'd the Evidence of the Witneſſes, ſo called, I now proceed to the reſt of the Trial. To the Queſtion, (*p.* 74,) *Why did not Chriſt appear publicly to all the People, eſpecially to the Magiſtrates? Why where ſome Witneſſes cull'd and choſen out, and others excluded?* Mr. B. anſwers, *it may be ſufficient to ſay, where there are Witneſſes enow, no Judge, no Jury complains for want of more*; *and therefore, if the Witneſſes we have are ſufficient, 'tis no Objection that we have not others and more.* But can theſe be ſufficient Witneſſes, when their Evidence is not ſufficient to prove the Fact? Then he

he compares it to a Will, which requires but three Witneſſes, cull'd out that they may be good ones; and adds, *How comes it to paſs then, that the very Thing which ſhuts out all Suſpicion, in other Caſes, ſhould, in this Caſe, be of all others the moſt ſuſpicious Thing in itſelf?* It is becauſe this Caſe, of all others, is the moſt uncommon. If it were of no more Conſequence than any ordinary Affair, why do they make ſuch a Stir about it? Is the Proof of a Relation's Will, and the Proof of the Will of God, a parallel Caſe? Or a Legacy in this World, and eternal Life, of the ſame Value? Should not the Proof be as clear as the Importance of the Caſe requires? Is it not very abſurd, that the meaneſt Witneſſes ſhould be pick'd and cull'd out for the beſt, in the greateſt Affairs? That Matters of the higheſt Concern, and of the moſt extraordinary Nature, ſhould be, or ſaid to be, ſufficiently atteſted by the moſt doubtful Evidence! That thoſe who are principally intereſted in a Will, the very Executors and Legatees, ſhould be allowed to be the beſt and only Witneſſes of the ſaid Will: This would not be pleaded for, or granted in any Court in Chriſtendom, nor paſs in any Trial, but in this.

The following Improbabilities and Abſurdities ſhew, what Reaſon there is of Complaint. That *Jeſus* ſhould be ſaid publicly to predict his own Reſurrection, and not fulfil it in public. That he ſhould promiſe it to be the Sign of his Miſſion to that evil Generation, yet never ſhew them the Sign. That he ſhould inform the People that he would riſe again the third Day, yet diſappoint all their Expectations in ſeeing him. That he ſhould put the Proof of his Miſſion on the Reality of his riſing again; yet never diſcover that Fact to them, by riſing before them, nor by appearing to them afterwards. Had it been publickly known to all *Jeruſalem*, that *Jeſus* would riſe again the third Day, all *Jeruſalem*, that believed it, would have expected to ſee him. If they were diſappointed in their Expectations, what was it but deceiving them in that very Point, in which, of all others, he ſhould have ſatisfied them. Not to appear to them, if he promiſed it, and put the Truth of his Miſſion on it, was denying the Truth of his Miſſion, and falſifying his Word. They ſaid, **Let him come down from the Croſs, and we will believe in him:* And would they not have believed in him, if he had come up from the Dead? Is it propable, that an extraordinary Action, done for an extroardinary End, and highly neceſſary to be known to Mankind, ſhould be ſo ſecretly done, that no Man ſaw it! That ſo great an Action ſhould be done ſo improper a Way! That *Jeſus* ſhould require Men to believe his Diſciples, rather than their own Senſes, in an Affair where Reaſon can be of no Aſſiſtance! That ſuch a ſurprizing Method ſhould be taken to ſave all Men in ſuch a manner, that ſcarce any Man, that examines it, can believe it! That a Miracle ſhould be wrought in ſecret to convince Men,

* Matt. xxvii. 42.

Men, and never manifeſt itſelf to the Satisfaction of Mankind; nor leave any Footſteps, or marks on Earth, of its having ever been yet abſolutely neceſſary to be believed! That he appeared in ſuch a manner to his Diſciples, which ſcarce convinced themſelves; yet ſent them to convince the World! That he was with them forty Days, yet appeared but four Times, or but now and then; and that he ſhould not abide conſtant as before, nor be ſeen by others!

The Witneſſes give us no Account where he ſpent the reſt of his Time, and to what End. Whether the Spirit of God *drove* * or *led* him into the Wilderneſs to the Devil again; for 'tis ſaid †, he only *departed from him for a Seaſon*; where, and with whom, he ſtaid forty Days before to no Purpoſe ‡. Choice Company for the Son of God! Since *Jeſus* might do and ſay all that is related of him, after his Reſurrection, in leſs than forty Hours; and of all the forty Nights, he never, that we hear of, lodg'd one Night with any of his Diſciples. Theſe Things are as ſurprizing as his Reſurrection. That *Jeſus* roſe again from the Dead, ſtaid forty Days afterwards, no body knows where, and purpoſely avoided the moſt right and rational Method of its being certainly known to the World, *viz.* by avoiding to appear to the World! That after the Watch had ſpread Lyes about, he did not ſhew himſelf to the Rulers, nor the People, to convince them of the contrary! That he, who was the Meſſenger of Truth, ſhould countenance Lyes by his Silence and Abſence! They could not have put him to Death again, if they would, for he could appear and diſappear at Pleaſure. No doubt but the Sight of *Jeſus* would have ſtruck them with ſufficient Awe and Terror, from attempting it. Why did he not, after his Reſurrection, undeceive his Diſciples in their Notions of temporal Victory and Grandeur, when they ask'd him about it? Or take Poſſeſſion of the Kingd om of *Iſrael*, fulfil the Scriptures of the Prophets, and prove himſelf the Meſſiah? Why not appear in public for the public Good, maintain the public Cauſe of his Nation and People? And why did he, at the very laſt, leave his Diſciples in Expectation of it, and baulk all their Expectations: Promiſe to come again preſently §, and is not come yet? Theſe Diſappointments give too much Reaſon to cry out, *Why is his Chariot ſo long in coming? Why tarry the Wheels of his Chariot?* Is he not riſen? Did he not aſcend? Has he not triumph'd over Death and the Grave, and led Captivity captive?

Mr. *B.* pleads, (p. 75.) That *every Soldier who guarded the Sepulchre was to the* Jews *a Witneſs of the Reſurrection, of their own chuſing:* But it does not appear there were any; and if there were, how could they be Witneſſes who ſaw no Reſurrection, and reported there was none; but that the Diſciples ſtole the Body of *Jeſus* away? A proper Proof agreeable to the Reaſon and Fitneſs of the Thing is wanting.

Aſſer-

* Mark i. 12, 13. † Luke iv. 13. ‡ This Story, if elſewhere, would ſeem blaſphemous and fabulous. § Matt. x. 23.

Aſſertions ought not to be credited without proper Evidence, ſuch as in the Nature of the Thing is juſt and reaſonable. He that believes on any other Evidence, may have a preſumptive Faith, but cannot have a reaſonable one. If they had not the Proof of *Jeſus's* Reſurrection from his own perſonal appearing, of all Things the moſt eaſy to him, if he roſe again, and the moſt convincing to them: Why ſhould they depend on the Credit of others, rather than their own Senſes? Or why ſhould any other Miracle be given them to prove the Thing, than what the Nature of the Thing itſelf was capable of giving, moſt reaſonable for the them to require, and moſt juſt and fit for *Jeſus* to grant.

Mr. *B.* inſinuates, (p. 76, 77.) That according to *Matthew* xxiii. *Chriſt ſolemnly took his Leave of the* Jews, *and cloſed his Commiſſion* to them at his Death; *and as to appearing to them after his Reſurrection, he could not do it conſiſtently with his own Prediction.* Ye ſhall ſee me no more till ye ſhall ſay, Bleſſed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord. *That the* Jews *were not in this Diſpoſition after the Reſurrection, nor are they in it yet.* The Reaſon of that is, becauſe he did not appear to them after his Reſurrection. According to St. *Luke* * he himſelf, after that, fulfilled his own Prophecy†, and found them then in that Diſpoſition before his Death, which the Gentleman complains they were not in after his Reſurection, nor are yet: And, after that, taught daily in the Temple; and *Jeſus* was obliged to appear to them again after his Reſurrection, conſiſtently with his own Prediction, if it was his own, the Sign of the Prophet *Jonah*, if it meant a Reſurrection.

Mr. *B.* remarks, (p. 78.) That *ſince all Men have an equal Right to demand a ſpecial and particular Evidence, why may not the ſame be demanded for every Country and every Age?* I know not why every Country and Age ſhould not have it, ſince they have an equal Right to demand it. A ſpecial and particular Action requires a ſpecial and particular Proof, to every Country and Age, that are eſpecially and particularly concerned in the Caſe. If it needs a miraculous one, becauſe it admits of no natural Proof, miraculous Proof ſhould be given: For the Proof of an Action, which muſt be credited, ought to be ſuch as is ſufficient and fit to prove the Action.

If Miracles are once neceſſary to prove a Fact, they are always neceſſary; becauſe the ſame Proof, or an adequate one, is neceſſary to prove the ſame Operation. The Diſtance of Time and Place makes them not leſs, but rather more neceſſary. A Hiſtory of an extraordinary uncommon kind ſhould have more than common Proof. That is, the Proofs given ſhould be equal to the Things to be proved. And the more momentous the Affair is, or is eſteemed, ſo much the more plain, and certain, ſhould be the Evidence.

Mr. *B.* ſays (p. 78.) *There is, in my Apprehenſion, nothing more unreaſonable,*

* Luke xiii. 34, 35. † Chap. xix. 38. ‡ Mark xvi. 17, 18. ix. 23. John xiv. 12.

reaſonable, than to neglect and deſpiſe plain and ſufficient Evidence before us, and to ſit down to imagine what kind of Evidence would have pleaſed us, and then to make the want of ſuch Evidence an Objection to the Truth, which yet, if well conſidered, would be found to be well eſtabliſhed.

The Caſe is not here rightly ſtated. The Evidence is objected againſt, becauſe it is not plain, ſufficient, nor well eſtabliſhed: For, the more thoroughly it is conſidered, the more inſufficient it appears. And there is, in my Apprehenſion, nothing more reaſonable, than to reject inſufficient Evidence, and conſider what means of Conviction the nature of the Thing requires, and to make the want of ſuch Proof an Objection to that Fact, which, if well conſidered, cannot be well eſtabliſhed without it. There is as much Reaſon now for ſome ſuitable Miracle to prove the Reſurrection, as there was then; for there is no plain and certain Evidence before us, the want of which is a ſufficient Objection, and ever will be, to invalidate the Truth of a Fact ſo ill eſtabliſhed.

Mr. *B.* obſerves, (p. 79.) That *the Apoſtles were choſen to be Witneſſes of the Reſurrection, becauſe they were choſen to bear Teſtimony of it to the World, not becauſe they only were admitted to ſee Chriſt after his Reſurrection; for the Fact is otherwiſe. The Goſpel, indeed, concerned to ſhew the Evidence on which the Faith of the World was to reſt, is very particular in ſetting forth the ocular Demonſtrations which the Apoſtles had of the Reſurrection; and mentions others who ſaw Chriſt after his Reſurrection, only accidentally, as the Thread of the Hiſtory led to it.*

It had been better to have choſen any other for Witneſſes than theſe; they were the moſt improper Perſons to convince the World, becauſe they were moſt intereſted in the Affair: Half a dozen Watchmen would have been better than a dozen Apoſtles; Men intereſted in no Party. But if they had been Enemies, converted by a miraculous Reſurrection, it would have been better ſtill. One Apoſtle *Paul* did more Execution than the other Eleven. But among all that ſaw *Jeſus*, none ſuch ſaw him, and of all thoſe who ſaw him, the Apoſtles only atteſted it, and were choſen to that End, and for that End were admitted to ſee him. Others ſaw him, but they were not required to witneſs it. Tho' when Men relate a Story, and are willing to be credited, (as all Men are who think they ſpeak Truth, and are concerned that it ſhould be received as ſuch;) they are willing to inform their Auditors, what Perſons beſides themſelves, know of it, and all convincing Particulars. This is a Support to the Credit of it. Every Witneſs to Truth is an Aid in its Favour. The leſs Concern the Relater has in it, his Relation has the greater Credit; and the Credit of others diminiſhes in Proportion as the Relaters are intereſted in the Caſe. None but Enthuſiaſts dare to conceive, that an implicit Faith is to be given to their dogmatical Aſſertions, that their bare Word ought to be taken, excluſive of all other Proof; that all other

Men's Words are to be diſregarded in Compariſon of theirs, be the Facts they relate ever ſo miraculous or romantic; becauſe, diſbelieving them, in their Notion and bold Aſſertion, is not believing the Spirit of God. But with the greater Aſſurance any one tells a Lye or Romance, for ſacred Truth, tho' he ſanctifies it with the Name of God Almighty, the leſs Credit ſhould be given him, not only in that, but in all Things elſe. God never requires Men to believe Things contrary to Evidence, Nature, and common Senſe; for his Government of all Creatures is by the Senſe he has given them, never by what contradicts it. 'Tis the Mark of Impoſture to do this. Why ſhould the Apoſtles, of all Men, require the whole World, to credit the greateſt Miracle that ever was on the leaſt Foundation? And why ſhould the Credit of this depend on them alone? If 120 or 500 ſaw him beſides, could they not atteſt it as well? Did the Apoſtles require a Faith as miraculous as the Fact? Why could not other Men ſpeak Truth, and atteſt what they ſaw, as well as the Apoſtles? Is Truth ever the worſe for being well atteſted? Or is that Faith moſt true which has the leaſt Evidence? And why muſt other People's Words be of ſo little Account, as not to be worth the Notice, but as the Thread of the Hiſtory led to it accidentally? 'Tis nothing to the Purpoſe to tell me, that 120, or 500 Men, knew it beſides, when not one of them is named, nor the Credit of one of them known if they were. St. *Paul*, who ſays 500 ſaw Chriſt after his Reſurrection, knew nothing of the Matter himſelf; he was none of the Number, unleſs viſionally, which is no real Proof. The Proof of theſe 500, atteſted by St. *Paul*, depends but upon his ſingle Teſtimony, or of ſome other in his Name, or of the greateſt Lyer in the World, the Church of *Rome:* Such Evidence as we have is not eaſy for any to credit, but thoſe in whom it was planted by Education, and grew up in them before their Reaſon, by which Means, the Belief of Witches, Apparitions, and Fairies, are as credible as this. The Goſpel is very particular in ſetting forth, that the Apoſtles had no ocular Demonſtration of the Reſurrection at all, and, the Appearances of *Jeſus* afterwards are ſuch, as demonſtrate them to be no Demonſtration: Whoever examines them with Seriouſneſs, muſt be concerned, that the *Evidence on which the Faith of the World was to reſt*, ſhould have no better Foundation to reſt on! In all other Caſes, of the greater Concern, the Matter is, and the more are intereſted in it, the more certain, full, and ſatisfactory, the Evidence or Proof ought to be. But in this Caſe, it ſeems it muſt be the leſs, that *the Faith of the World* may be the greater! As if it was meritorious to believe the moſt incredible Story that could be told, upon the worſt Evidence that could be given; which, indeed, would be proper, if the Faith required was to be as miraculous as the Fact to be believed.

Mr. *B.* ſays, (p. 8.) *Will the Gentleman pretend to prove that they* (the Angels) *were improperly employed in this great and wonderful Work,*

Work, the Reſurrection of Chriſt? Undoubtedly they were very improperly. 1*ſt*, Becauſe they frightened away the Watch from ſeeing it, and being Witneſſes, 2*dly*, Becauſe Chriſt had no Need of them, for, undoubtedly, he could have riſen as well without them. Had Jeſus Need of an Angel to roll away the Stone, or to defend him againſt the Watch? Did he need their Aſſiſtance? If not, what Buſineſs had they there? Or had he Need of Angels in white to lighten him, becauſe he roſe in the dark? 3*dly*, They were unneceſſary, becauſe they looked like Men, and made the Matter look like Fraud. If they were neceſſary Witneſſes of the Reſurrection, why did they depart at the Approach of Day-light?

Mr. *B.* aſſerts, (p. 81.) That *it is not upon the Credit of the poor ſilly Women, that we believe Angels were concerned, but upon the Report of thoſe who wrote the Goſpels, who delivered it as a Truth known to themſelves, and not merely as a Report taken from the Women.* This is a Miſtake: It is upon the Credit of the Women meerly, that 'tis believed Angels were concerned *. Thoſe that wrote the Goſpels knew nothing of it themſelves, for none of them pretend to have ſeen the Angels. St. *Matthew*, St. *Mark*, and St. *Luke* do not ſo much as ſay, that any of *them* went to the Sepulchre, and the beloved Diſciple, who ſays, *he* went with *Peter*, ſaw no Angel.

'Tis ſaid, That the *Women report, that the Body was not in the Sepulchre, but ſo far from reporting the Reſurrection, that they did not believe it.* This is contrary to the Report given by all the Evangeliſts †. But 'tis too common for Men to believe they are certainly right, when they are apparently wrong. Therefore, ſince the beſt may err, we ſhould beware of Cenſoriouſneſs and Perſecution for ſpeculative Points.

The Trial boaſts, That *if Men only muſt be admitted* Witneſſes, *of them we have enow to eſtabliſh this Truth.* How many are they? Why, St. *Paul* ſays five hundred. Was St. *Paul* one? No. How did St. *Paul* know? He was told ſo. Who, and what were thoſe five hundred? Are five of them mentioned, beſides what are named by the Evangeliſts? No. But, ſays, Mr. *B.* the Author of the *Acts* tells us, there was an hundred and twenty. Who was that Author? 'Tis thought to be St. *Luke*, but 'tis not known. When was it written? Or where? Nor that neither. Upon what Authority was it received at firſt, and communicated to us? Upon the Authority of the Church of *Rome*, that Mother of Lies and Abominations. Well, but fourteen or fifteen ſaw Jeſus after his Reſurrection; the eleven Diſciples, and *Mary Magdalene*, and perhaps, the other *Mary* and *Cleopas*. Have you the Evidence of theſe fifteen? No. But we have two of them, that were Eye-witneſſes, that ſaw him, St. *Matthew* and St. *John*. Are you infallibly ſure the two Goſpels of St. *Matthew* and St. *John* were written by themſelves;

* Luke xxiv. 23. † Matth. xxviii. 8. Mark xvi. 10. Luke xxiv. 9. John xx. 18.

and if ſo, that nothing is in their Goſpels but what they wrote? That theſe Goſpels were written without Error at firſt? And that none has crept into them ſince? That no Abſurdity or Contradiction can be proved out of the Evangeliſts Writings compared together? No; this is to believed, but the contrary may be proved. Here's a bleſſed Reduction, from five hundred Witneſſes to two, and they contradict one another. Yet theſe fallible Accounts are infallibly believed, and believed to be infallible. The Work of Faith is a wonderful Work! A Work of Wonders! *If none but Men muſt be admitted, we have enow to eſtabliſh this Truth.* What's become of them? Not one remains that can be depended on. The Appearance was of ſuch Sort, that the Witneſſes themſelves did not believe it *.

Mr. *B.* goes on, (p. 81.) *If you Queſtion their Sincerity, they lived miſerably, and died miſerably for the Sake of Truth.* The Truth of this may be juſtly queſtioned, unleſs we had better Proof. And whether they lived better at their Trade of Fiſhing, than of Preaching? When the Believers ſold what they had, made one common Stock to carry on the Cauſe, and ſet up the Apoſtles with Caſh, all was at their Diſpoſal; therefore, that they made a good Living of it, may be reaſonably concluded. I believe it will be hard to prove, that they all died Martyrs for Truth. Multitudes every where run all Hazards for the Sake of living well. *But they died for aſſerting a Fact they were Eye-witneſſes to, therefore the Fact was Truth.* But, as the Truth of this Fact wants Proof, ſo does their dying for it. There is no proving a Fact true, by other Facts which equally want Proof.

Says Mr. *B.* (p. 49.) *The chief Prieſts try to murder the Apoſtles, enter into Combinations to aſſaſſinate them, prevail with* Herod *to put one of them to Death, but not ſo much as a Charge againſt them of any* Fraud *in the Reſurrection.* How is this known? Becauſe they themſelves have not mentioned it. 'Twould prove them to be the veriеſt Simpletons in Nature, if they had. Yet, (p. 104.) the Gentlemen ſays, *The Thing for which they ſuffered, was the* Truth *of the Reſurrection.* So then the chief Prieſts never ſo much as charged the Apoſtles with any *Fraud* in the Reſurrection; but they put them to Death, becauſe they knew it was true.

I beg Leave to lay before you another Evidence, ſays the Advocate for the Defendants, (p. 82.) *paſſed over in Silence by the Gentleman on the other Side.* That is, *The Evidence of the* Spirit, *Acts* v. 22. Indeed, that's the only Evidence that can be produced; but we, in this Age, have almoſt loſt that, except among the Diſciples of the inſpired Mr. *Whitefield*, who has blown up a new Light of it, which now again declines; and the Flame of the Spirit has much to do to keep burning; notwithſtanding it is ſo powerfully ventilated by his Bellows. Yet this Evidence, great as it is, and, no doubt, the greateſt, is what every one thinks it to be; and every one ſays of it what he

* Matth. xxviii. 17. Mark xvi. 11, 13. Luke xxiv. 11, 41. John xx. 14.

he pleaſes; therefore 'tis none at all, but to him that has it, and that is ſuch as his Faith makes it. 'Tis granted, that Believers need no other Evidence; but what is this to thoſe that have it not, who call for a Sign from Heaven, or a certain Proof that the Sign, already ſaid to be given, was ever given, no Footſteps of it remaining: 'Tis certain, that, if this Miracle be diſproved, all ſubſequent Miracles to prove it are no Proof. If the Thing cannot ſtand by itſelf, nothing elſe can ſupport it. If it be a Fraud, or Falſity, all Pretenſions to prove it are Frauds, or Falſities. Suggeſted Proofs, (p. 84.) are no Proofs. Therefore the Inferences, drawn from ſuch, are of no Force. Things not known cannot be proved by Things equally unknown.

'Tis alledged, (p. 103.) That, *becauſe the Apoſtles were choſen to bear Teſtimony to the Reſurrection, they had the fulleſt Evidence of the Truth.* If their Evidence was the fulleſt, what ſad Evidence muſt the others have! *Not merely by ſeeing Chriſt once or twice after his Death.* The Evangeliſts ſay, they ſaw him but two or three Times; though the Gentleman adds, *but by frequent Converſations with him for forty Days together before his Aſcenſion.* Now, ſays he, (p. 104.) *if you allow the Sufferings of the Apoſtles to prove their Sincerity; and conſider that they died for the Truth of a Matter of Fact.* Suffering for aſſerting a Fact is no more a Proof of it, than of the Truth of Doctrines; nor is it any more the Proof of Sincerity, than of Obſtinacy; nor of real Knowledge, than of ſtrong Imagination. *When a Man reports to me,* ſays the Gentleman, *an uncommon Fact, yet ſuch an one as, in its own Nature, is a plain Object of Senſe; if I believe him not, it is not becauſe I ſuſpect his Eyes, or his Senſe of feeling, but merely becauſe I ſuſpect his Sincerity.* If a Man reports ſuch an uncommon Fact, that, before I can believe it, I muſt be very well aſſured, my own Senſes were not deceived, had I imagined I ſaw it, certainly I may doubt the Evidence of the Reporter's Senſes, yet not ſuſpect his Sincerity. How many have confidently reported incredible Facts, with ſtrong Perſuaſion of the Truth of them? Yet all the Reality of the Facts conſiſted in the Reality of their Imaginations. My Suſpicion, therefore, may ariſe from doubting of the Affirmator's ſeeing inviſible Things, or miſtaking one Thing for another, and not his Sincerity; but, that his eaſy Credulity makes his Senſes liable to Deception. There have not been wanting thoſe, that, at the Hazard of their Lives, have aſſerted falſe Stories for true, only becauſe they believed them to be ſo: For thoſe, who have the warmeſt Sincerity, have, in the Things they believe, generally, the greateſt Obſtinancy. And a ſtrong Imagination has not leſs Effect on the Temper and Conduct of ſuch as are ſincere and credulous, than evident and ſenſible Conviction has on thoſe of cooler Tempers, more courteouſly inſincere.

There remain but two Arguments more, which I ſhall juſt mention.

One is, * *Could* Gamaliel *poſſibly have given this Advice,* If this

* Page 51, Acts v.

Work be of Men it will come to nought; but if it be of God ye cannot overthrow it, leſt haply ye be found to fight againſt God; *and ſuppoſed the Hand of God might be with the Apoſtles, if he had known that there was a Cheat diſcovered in the Reſurrection of Jeſus? Could the whole Senate have followed this Advice, had they believed the Diſcovery of the Cheat?* Allowing the Subſtance of the Story true, the Particulars may be very well queſtioned, eſpecially the Truth of *Gamaliel*'s uttering theſe Words; for whatever he ſaid, was delivered in private Council, when the Apoſtles were ſecluded, by the Story-teller's own Confeſſion. How then ſhould they know what was there ſaid? *Gamaliel* might be ſo much of a Philoſopher as well as a Scholar, to diſſuade them from rigid Perſecution, and his Argument prevailed: For, whatever his Counſel was, can only be conjectured from the Conſequence.

The other Argument is, * That, had *Agrippa* ſuſpected the Reſurrection a Cheat, he would not have ſaid to *Paul*, *almoſt thou perſuadeſt me to be a Chriſtian.* Let us examine the Force of this Argument. *Paul* ſaid to *Agrippa*, King *Agrippa*, *believeſt thou the Prophets*, and, without waiting for an Anſwer, *Paul* perſuaded him that he believed them: *I know that thou believeſt*, ſaid he. Then 'twas natural for *Agrippa* to make ſuch an A[illegible]; which means no more, th[illegible]ou would fain perſuade me [illegible] I am almoſt a Chriſtian; or, that I believe the Prophets as the Chriſtians do; or, that I am almoſt as mad as you; for he had before told *Paul* he was a madman.

Thus I have run through all the Arguments in the Trial. On which Side Truth lies, I wiſh the Reader to perceive. Perhaps, when I can ſee no more, ſome bitter and malignant Adverſary, to diſplay his Talents, may level all his Artillery of Wit, Learning, and Spleen, againſt me, inſtead of anſwering, as the reverend Prieſt Mr. *Chandler*, has done againſt the moral Philoſopher Dr. *Morgan*, who has fired off twenty ſheets to ſhoot one of his, and miſſed the Mark.

Should any enquire, what is my End and Aim in all this? I anſwer, to ſhew Mankind the ſtupid Nature of Bigotry, and the Wickedneſs of perſecuting Men for Opinions, which will not bear the Enquiry. To convince the World, that an hiſtorical Faith is no Part of true and pure Religion, which is founded only on Truth and Purity. That it does not conſiſt in the Belief of any Hiſtory, which, whether true or falſe, makes no Man wiſer nor better. My End is to hold forth the acceptable Light of Truth, which makes Men free, enables them to break the Bands of Creed-makers and Impoſers in ſunder, and to caſt their Cords from us; and to ſet at Liberty Captives bruiſed with their Chains; to convince thoſe that believe they ſee, or that ſee only through Faith's Optics, that their Blindneſs remaineth. My Deſign is to recover the Dignity of Virtue, to promote that Veneration for Wiſdom and Truth,

* Page 50, Acts xxiv.

Truth, which has been debaſed and degraded by Faith; by a Faith which has *not ſent Peace on Earth, but a Sword* *, *and ſet the World on Fire; which has ſet a Man at Variance againſt his Father, and the Daughter againſt her Mother, and has made a Man's Foes thoſe of his own Houſhold*; a Faith which has made Men mad, excited the deareſt Relations to HATE, † perſecute, deſtroy, and burn one another, the Conſequence of *Hatred:* Where this fooliſh Faith bears Sway, the Tree of Knowledges produces damning Fruit, while Ignorance is the Mother of Devotion: But under the *benign Influence* of GEORGE our King, in this glorious Time of Light and Liberty, this divine Hag and her pious Witchrafts, which were brought forth in Darkneſs, and nouriſhed by Obſcurity, faint at the Approach of Day, and vaniſh upon Sight.

NOW having gone through the whole Affair, with as much Clearneſs and Brevity as I am able; I proceed to conſider what was before paſſed over of Mr. *B*'s Arguments, in Favour of the natural Poſſibility of Miracles in general ‡.

To prove the Poſſibility of Things improbable to Reaſon, the Gentleman argues, (p. 60.) That what Nature produces in one Country, may be incredible to People in another; as Cold congealing Waters to Ice, may be to a Man that lives in a hot Climate, who never ſaw any ſuch Thing. Be it ſo. In this Caſe, here's all the Evidence of Senſe to prove the Thing where it is; and of this there are Places and Witneſſes enow. He that cannot believe, may go and have ſenſible Conviction. And, *if an hundred ſuch Inſtances might be named, 'tis needleſs.* For tho' *nothing is more apparently abſurd, than to make one Man's Ability in diſcerning, and his Veracity in reporting plain Facts, depend upon the Skill or Ignorance of the Hearer*; yet if ſomething be reported to me, or impoſed on me for Truth, which appears the leſs to be ſo, the more I examine it: Muſt I deny my diſcerning Faculties, and my own Veracity in examining; and depend upon the Art or Authority of the Reporter or Impoſtor? If (as 'tis called) the *plain Fact* reported be a plain Abſurdity to my Senſe and Underſtanding, and contradictory to the conſtant Courſe of Nature, ſhould I renounce the Evidence of what Senſes are alone capable of trying it, and of Men's common and conſtant Experience of the known Laws thereof; to depend on the Reporters or Impoſers Judgment and Veracity; one or both of which may be to me as queſtionable as the Report. If the plain Fact pretended to have no other Evidence but the bare Report, and ſuch as is inconſiſtent with itſelf, as well as with the Reaſon of Man, and the Nature of Things; let all impartial Men judge, whether it is my *preconceived Opinion*, or the want of good Evidence, *that outweighs the*

* Matth. x. 34, 35, 36. † Luke xiv. 26.

‡ It would ſwell this Tract too large to recite Words of the Author. I muſt therefore refer to the Trial itſelf, beginning at p. 59, which is doing that Gentleman and the Reader Juſtice.

Credit of the Reporters, and makes their Veracity to be called in Queſtion. What no Man's Senſes ever diſcerned, was never the Object of any Man's Senſe. If (p. 61.) a Stone appeared to roll up a Hill of its own Accord to my Sight, I ſhould think I had Reaſon to doubt the Veracity of my Eye-ſight, or of the Object. Therefore I cannot admit the like Fact, on the Evidence of others: Becauſe pretended Facts, which are contrary to Nature, can have no natural Evidence, though they may be called Poſitive; that is, they are poſitively aſſerted, and muſt be as poſitively believed; for Evidence there is none. What Conceptions any Man frames to himſelf of the Courſe of Nature, from his own *Experience and Obſervation*, are not *Prejudices and Imaginations*; but what *Senſe and Reaſon* are concerned about. This is the very Foundation of that right Reaſon, which *can never contradict the Truth of Things.*

Any romantic Story ſaid to be ſeen, and heard, may be called *a plain manifeſt Caſe, diſcernible by the Senſes of Men; of which they are therefore qualified to be good Witneſſes.* Things aſſerted, which are contrary to the Experience, and Reaſon of all Mankind; *and to what they know of the Law and uſual Courſe of Nature*, are, to the common Senſe and Underſtanding of Men, utterly impoſſible; becauſe ſuch Aſſertions contradict all Men's Notions of thoſe Laws, that are known by common Experience. Therefore they cannot admit the Facts aſſerted on *any* Evidence; becauſe *they in their own* Nature exclude all *Evidence*; as all Impoſſibilities muſt conſequently do. Every miraculous Fact then ſhould be moſt exactly ſcrutinized in every Part, to attain a full Aſſurance of the Poſſibility of it. If in any one Point it eſcapes Examination, therein the Fallacy may conſiſt; which not being diſcerned, it may paſs for a real Miracle, tho' a notorious Fraud. *Nothing is therefore more apparently abſurd*, than to make ſome Men's poſitive Aſſertions, without being ever able to know their Veracity, or the Truth of the Fact, to be the Standard of other Men's Faith.

If our Senſes inform us rightly * *what the uſual Courſe of Things is*, and we conclude that it may be otherwiſe, without proper and infallible Proof; we outrun the Information of our Senſes, and the Concluſion ſtands upon Preſumption, not upon Senſe and Reaſon. Yet ſuch Concluſions do Men form, who recede from that general Courſe, and entertain Miſtakes and Prejudices. As we know by Experience that all Men die, and riſe no more; therefore, we conclude, for a dead Man to riſe to Life again, is contrary to the uniform and ſettled Courſe of Nature. Yet if we argue, that it is not contrary nor repugnant to the real Laws thereof, as the Gentleman inſinuates, we make the uniform and ſettled Courſe, and the real Laws of Nature, two different Things. Thus, we argue without any Foundation, either from Senſe or Reaſon; all which inform us, that it is impoſſible for a dead Body to live again: To believe it poſſible contradicts this Maxim, *That Nature is ſteady and uniform in her Operations:* For one Miracle or Action, done contrary

* Compare this with Page 64. in the Trial.

trary to her Laws, contradicts all her ſteady uniform Springs and Movements; and all that Mankind call Truth and Reaſon. Therefore, I cannot but believe, till the Courſe of Nature is changed, that it is infinitely a greater Thing to give Life to a Body once dead, than to give Life and being, in a natural Way, to ten thouſand Bodies that never had it; for the latter is done daily, the former never. I ſee no Reaſon to allow that poſſible to be done, which admits of no poſſible Proof; For then a Way is opened to allow of any Impoſſibility. It is very eaſy for any one to believe what is commonly done; but what is never done, or never can be proved, may be called Faith, but has no Foundation. Becauſe I cannot account for whatever is demanded, muſt I believe whatever is propoſed? He that is perſuaded to believe any Thing contrary to the known Laws of Nature, becauſe there are Things he does not know, is ſeduced to renounce his Underſtanding; and becauſe he knows not all poſſible Things, is perſuaded to believe that all Things are poſſible. Poſitive and preſumptive Evidence is of no Weight againſt the Reaſon and Nature of Things. Such Evidence ſhould be rejected, rather than the Nature of Things ſhould be ſubverted to ſupport ſuch Evidence.

It may be objected, That God can do Things contrary to Nature. But what Proof is there that God ever did, or will, if Tradition be ſet aſide, and Men may ſuſpend their Belief, till rationally convinced, and the Rod of Damnation removed from them for doubting, which drives Faith into the Timorous, as a Mallet does a Wedge into a Block; and in like manner divides, rends, and weakens the Underſtanding. Where is the Proof of it even in any one Miracle, which Tradition informs us of. If the Evidence given be inſufficient, what Method of Conviction remains? Were we to go to the Place where Report ſays it was done, there are no Signs of it left. If we enquire of thoſe among whom it was ſaid to be done, they know nothing of the Matter, nor can we be ſure they ever did. The Apoſtles are ſaid to have proved the Reſurrection by Miracles, but not one Believer can prove it by any now, if the Salvation of all Mankind depended on it; tho' the Power of working Miracles was promiſed to all Believers, yet none have it. If the true Way of proving the Faith is loſt, there can be no Proof, that the true Faith itſelf is not loſt.

Truth requires no Man's Aſſent without Conviction. Therefore, (p. 60.) *the Teſtimony of others ought not to be admitted, but in ſuch Matters as appear probable, or at leaſt poſſible to our Conceptions*; or we may admit any Thing. Such Things as may be probable or poſſible in Nature, but not to our Conceptions, require better Proof, in Proportion as they appear improbable or impoſſible to our Apprehenſions. It cannot then be criminal in any Man to with-hold his Aſſent to a Propoſition, or Story related, till he is fully convinced of the Truth of it; but it may not be ſafe for a Man to yield his Aſſent to what he is not fully convinced

convinced of; for this precludes further Examination, and eſtabliſhes Error, with all its Conſequences.

It is Knavery for one Man knowingly to miſlead another, Folly to deceive ourſelves, and Weakneſs to ſuffer ourſelves to be deceived. If we err, we may lead others into Error. If we would not beguile ourſelves, we ſhould not encourage others to do it, but be ſtrictly upon our Guard againſt Deceit; for Sincerity, which is alſo called Fidelity and Honeſty, is the Life and Soul of true Religion; Deception and Hypocriſy the Bane of it. Wicked and deſigning Men, who have trumped up a Power ſuperior to Nature and Reaſon, to deſtroy both, have depreciated the true born Daughter of God, *Faithfulneſs*, and anointed the baſtard *Faith* in her Room. Thoſe, who found Religion on extraordinary Pretenſions, ſay, that Nature, which is the Offspring of God, is degenerate and deficient; but it is their extraordinary Art that makes it appear ſo. Miraculous Cauſes muſt have miraculous Effects; but it cannot be proved that the latter have never appeared, therefore the former wants Proof.

Natural Powers are fit to anſwer all the Ends of Virtue and Religion; therefore ſupernatural Powers are needleſs. A Man of Honeſty and Underſtanding needs no ſupernatural Endowments, to inſtruct Mankind in unſpotted Sanctity of Heart and Manners, ſuch as may render them acceptable to God, and uſeful to one another; and conſequently make them as happy as they can be. No extraordinary or uncommon Inſpiration is neceſſary to teach the moſt excellent Morals that were ever taught, with the reaſonable Belief of one God, and Providence; witneſs CONFUCIUS, the great Philoſopher of *China*, who was inferior to none, yet neither a God, nor a Prophet. He was the Reviver of a Religion, of which Nature was the Author, which is as old as their Race, and their Country; which their wiſe Men ſtill eſteem and enjoy; and which God never aboliſhed; though he has permitted Fools, that diſlike it, to chuſe another. I never read, that it was either given, or confirmed by Miracles; but Truth has no Need of them; and that which has, hath Reaſon to be ſuſpected; for they may be pretended to, to gloſs over Error, and eſtabliſh Iniquity, but cannot make that true and good, which is in its own Nature otherwiſe.

A Power to work Miracles is a Power ſuperior to the univerſal Laws, by which the Syſtems of Things are governed. This is the Power of Imagination only; and contrary to the Attributes of God; to that which is the moſt clear of all others, his Unchangeableneſs. The ſame Cauſes muſt always produce the ſame Effects. But Miracles are urged to prove a Change in the Will of God; that is, impoſſible Things are pretended, to prove an Impoſſibility, or the Truth of a Falſhood. As this cannot be proved, ſo no ſuch Proofs were ever given; and 'tis impoſſible they ſhould be. As the Will of God cannot change, neither can the Execution of his Power; which is directed by his Will. If no ſuch Change can be,

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no ſuch Change can be manifeſted. If God can alter his Will, or if the diſplaying his eternal Wiſdom is not equally as conſtant and uniform as that Wiſdom is, he is then changeable, and may ceaſe to be wiſe and good.

The Power of God is under the Direction of his Wiſdom and Goodneſs, and limited thereby. A Power to do whatever is conſiſtent with theſe Attributes, denotes abſolute Perfection. The whole Production then of this Wiſdom, Goodneſs, and Power, muſt be a perfect Work, therefore cannot be better. There is no Room here for any ſuperior or other Power to interfere. God therefore made, and governs the World in the beſt Manner, or it would be an imperfect Work, and not ſhew forth the Perfections, but the Defect of the Operator; and, if beſt already, it cannot be made better. If God is a perfect Being, his Works are perfect and cannot be mended; becauſe he could not limit his Wiſdom, Goodneſs, or Power, in producing it, without being guilty of Folly, Evil, or Weakneſs. And, if God has in Creation diſplayed his Attributes, then all Things, at leaſt, collectively taken, and rightly underſtood, witneſs the Perfection of his Nature. And if ſo, God need not, or cannot exhibit any ſuperior Power, and Proof of his Perfection, that what is commonly known, and conſtantly manifeſt. If the Power of God is always directed by perfect Wiſdom, no greater can be diſplayed, for Perfection cannot be mended. The Works of a wiſe Operator ſhew forth his Skill in the beſt manner poſſible; ſo that the Performance may not bring a Reflection on the Artiſt, by its want of extraordinary Repairs afterwards. If God be then perfectly wiſe, his Work is a perfect Work, and wants no miraculous mending Power, nor can admit of it; it may marr, but cannot mend that which is beſt already. As the Work is, ſuch is the Workman. As the Seed is, ſo will be the Produce. From hence it appears, that, as there is no Need of ſuch Power, ſo the Impoſſibility of it is evident.

But if Miracles were ever neceſſary, whether the divine and human Nature, or the Nature of Things be changeable or unchangeable, they muſt be always neceſſary. For, if God ever wrought Miracles, as the Proof of the Revelation of his Will, he will always purſue the ſame Method, if he is an unchangeable Being. If the Nature of Things are unchangeable, the Method of attaining the Knowledge of God's Will muſt be always the ſame: And, if human Nature be ever the ſame, it will ever require the ſame Method of Conviction, or of attaining the Knowledge of the Will of God.

If God's Will be changeable, then there is a Neceſſity for his conſtant working Miracles, to diſcover ſuch a Change of his Will to Man; for ſo extraordinary a Will can never be known to us, without an extraordinary Revelation or Diſcovery of it, that we may be certain we are not deceived. But this ſuppoſes God's Will arbitrary, and not correſpondent to the apparent Reaſon, and natural Fitneſs of Things. In

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this Caſe, the Means, neceſſary to know it by once, are neceſſary to know it by always. If then Miracles were once given, there is the ſame Reaſon they ſhould ever be given. But if God acts agreeable to the natural Reaſon, and Fitneſs of Things, whether the divine, human, and mundane Nature be mutable or immutable, there is no Occaſion for the Interpoſition of any miraculous Power; becauſe, if they change, they all change together. If human Nature changes, then Miracles, that were Evidences of Truth at one Time, are not ſo at another; for different Natures require different Evidences of Truth; and, in that Caſe, what is Truth at one Time to a Man, will not be ſo to him at another. If the Nature of Things changes, Truth muſt change with it, if they are one; but, if they are not, then there is no Rule whereby to know what is right; and then Miracles are always neceſſary. But if human Nature, and the Fitneſs of Things change, contrary to the Will of God, they do not depend thereon; or if God's Will changes, and the Nature of Things do not, it is not the Production of his Will. Miracles, in theſe Caſes, muſt always be neceſſary to Man, whereby to know the Will of God. So that there muſt be great Confuſion in Nature, if a miraculous Power is needful to rectify it. But, if there be Rectitude in it, then a miraculous Power muſt pervert it. If Truth and Nature agree, natural Powers alone are capable of diſcovering Truth, and a ſupernatural, or ſuperior Power, can only confound it. If Men's natural Faculties are too weak, or perverſe, to direct them right, as long as they are naturally ſo, a miraculous Power, which was once neceſſary rightly to direct them, will be always ſo. For, if Man is in common the ſame, he muſt have one common Way of being dealt with.

If Truth is incapable of diſcovering itſelf, it has no natural nor proper Evidence; and is conſequently unknowable without a Miracle; which unleſs it be of ſuch ſort, as is the proper Evidence of the Truth it is wrought to prove, it is improperly done, and no Proof at all. If Truth has no proper Evidence of its own Nature, it cannot be proved by any Evidence foreign to itſelf. If then it cannot be known without ſuch Miracle, it cannot be known with it. Power cannot prove a Truth it has no Relation to. If ſome Men's Heads and Tongues ſhould be miraculouſly all on Fire, it is no Proof that a dead Man is riſen again; for the Proof of that depends on their Report, not on the Miracle, that being of a different Nature, and proves nothing leſs, or may prove any thing elſe, as much as it does the Truth of ſuch report. But if Truth be capable of diſcovering itſelf; if natural and proper Evidences neceſſarily attend it, it is ſufficiently knowable, without the Intruſion of any ſupernatural Power. In both theſe Caſes then, whether Truth be capable or incapable of diſcovering itſelf by natural intelligence, Powers, and Perceptions, Miracles either are always, or never neceſſary.

We are told, that God has wrought Wonders for the Satiſfaction

faction of one Generation and not for another; tho' they are equally neceſſary and uſeful to all People; but the Juſtice, Mercy, Goodneſs, and Wiſdom of God, is degraded hereby; becauſe, by this, God is repreſented to us as a partial Being. Therefore, the Belief of paſt Miracles is deſtructive to the moral Character of the Deity. The Wonders, which are ſaid to be wrought in one Age, can never convince a ſober Thinker in the next, unleſs there be ſuch laſting Monuments of them, and they are ſo clearly and fully evidenced, that they appear to be true againſt all Contradiction; nor is it fit they ſhould; for to believe Miracles were performed in a certain Manner, Time, and Place, of which no Shadow of Proof remains more than in the bare Report, is putting Faith in the Reporters, not in the Operators: Thus I may be always amuſed by fabulous Tales, as often as ſimple or bad Men pleaſe to relate them; unleſs I can be ſure that no Man will lie to ſerve a Turn, nor can be impoſed upon to believe a falſe Story.

But if God acts towards Mankind, as the moral Fitneſs of Things requires, there is no Occaſion for Miracles; for if reaſonable Exhortations to Virtue, and Dehortations from Vice; if prudent Perſuaſion, and juſt Laws, will not make People virtuous, nothing can. But Miracles rather force the Paſſions by violent, than guide them by gentle Means, and drive Men on without Senſe, than drive Senſe into them. The Surprize ſeizes the Imagination, the Perſon no longer heſitates concerning Truth, or deliberates of Virtue; but is carried away in the full Gale of his Paſſions, by the rapid Torrent of an aſtoniſhing Power, that bears down all before it.

The more Men are amuſed with miraculous Tales, they will be diverted from employing their Reaſon. But, when Truth is valued, the rational Faculties will be exerciſed, Enthuſiaſm ſinks of courſe, and Superſtition its Offſpring. The more Reſpect is paid to any Thing ſubſtituted in the room of Truth, and moral Righteouſneſs; the leſs are theſe regarded. The Reſurrection of theſe is Death to the falſe Righteouſneſs of Faith and Formality. When Men know they are to have nothing but what they work for, when they are aſſured they are not born to an Eſtate in the Kingdom of Heaven of another's purchaſing, they will not idly live on the Faith of it, but go to work, and endeavour their utmoſt to *work out their own Salvation* with Care and Diligence.

To conclude, I am therefore not without Hopes, that whether this Treatiſe be anſwered or not, it will prove of real Service to Religion, and make Men's Practices better; when they ſhall find they have nothing elſe to depend on for Happineſs here and hereafter, but their own perſonal Righteouſneſs, with their Love of Wiſdom, and Truth. For, if it be anſwered, Deiſts will be ſilenced, and Infidelity ſhall ſtop her Mouth. But if thoſe learned Gentlemen, who are the Directors of others, will not think fit to do it, but chuſe to give up ſpeculative Principles, and an hiſtorical Faith, rather than contend about them,

them, and to inſiſt only on that Practice, which will recommend Men in every Religion to the Favour of God, the Good-will of Men, and the Peace of their own Conſciences, and own, that the whole of the Chriſtian Religion, which is worth contending for, are all relative and ſocial Virtues, then the Contention between the *Chriſtian* and *Deiſt* will drop. Cenſoriouſneſs, and Reviling, and Slander, and Perſecution, and all Uncharitableneſs, for the Sake of Religion, ſhall ceaſe among us. Then *Faithfulneſs ſhall be the Girdle of our Loins.* The Bloſſoms of Wiſdom, and Fruit of Righteouſneſs, will be the Glory of our Iſle, *and the Lord alone ſhall be exalted in that Day.* We ſhall give Glory to that unchangeable God, whoſe Power forms, and whoſe Wiſdom governs all; who has no Partner in the one, nor Director in the other; whoſe Goodneſs and Mercy is not purchaſed with the Blood of a Victim. His Laws which are plain, univerſal, and eternal, the *Logos*, or Reaſon only reveals. This is that true Divine Light, *which enlightens all Men that come into the World*, who have any Degree of Underſtanding. It is the Gift of the *Grace of God that appears to all Men*, and 'tis reaſonable they ſhould be accountable for the Uſe of it. Let Believers think of this.

If theſe Things CAN be refuted, let them, for the Truth's Sake. Whenever Violence is uſed for Argument, 'tis for Want of better againſt INVINCIBLE TRUTH. But *the Wrath of Man worketh not the Righteouſneſs of God*; as St. *James* ſaith, *But if ye have bitter Envyings and Strife in your Hearts, glory not, and* LIE *not againſt the Truth. This Wiſdom deſcendeth not from above, but is earthly, ſenſual, and deviliſh. For where Envying and Strife is, there is Confuſion, and every evil Work. But the Wiſdom that is from above is firſt pure, then peaceable, gentle, and eaſy to be intreated, full of Mercy and good Fruits, without* PARTIALITY, *and without Hypocriſy.*

To ſave the Reader much Trouble in turning over the Leaves of his Teſtament in comparing Texts, to note whether my Obſervations on them are juſt, I have here placed together what the Goſpel Hiſtorians ſay on the Subject of the Reſurrection in their own Words.

I. *Of the Appearance of Jeſus Chriſt to* Mary Magdalene.

S. Matthew, Chap. XXVIII.

1 IN the End of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the firſt Day of the Week, came Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, to ſee the Sepulchre.

2 And behold there was a great Earthquake; for the Angel of the Lord deſcended from Heaven, and came and rolled back the Stone from the Door, and ſat upon it.

3 His Countenance was like Lightening, and his Raiment white as Snow.

4 And for fear of him the Keepers did ſhake, and became as dead Men.

5 And the Angel anſwered and ſaid unto the Women, Fear not ye, for I know that ye ſeek Jeſus, which was crucified.

6 He is not here: For he is riſen, as he ſaid: Come, ſee the Place where the Lord lay.

7 And go quick, and tell his Diſciples, that he is riſen from the Dead; and behold, he goeth before you into Galilee, there ſhall ye ſee him, lo, I have told you.

8 And they departed quickly from the Sepulchre, with Fear and great Joy, and did run to bring his Diſciples Word.

9 And as they went to tell his Diſciples, behold, Jeſus met them, ſaying, All Hail. And they came and held him by the Feet, and worſhipped him.

10 Then ſaid Jeſus unto them, Be not afraid: Go tell my Brethren, that they go into Galilee, and there ſhall they ſee me.

St. Mark, Chap. XVI.

1 And when the Sabbath was paſt, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the Mother of James and Salome, had bought ſweet Spices, that they might come and anoint him.

2 And very early in the Morning, the firſt Day of the Week, they came unto the Sepulchre at the riſing of the Sun.

3 And they ſaid among themſelves, Who ſhall roll us away the Stone from the Door of the Sepulchre?

4 And when they looked, they ſaw that the Stone was rolled away, for it was very great.

5 And entering into the Sepulchre,

chre, they ſaw a young Man ſitting on the right Side, clothed in a long white Garment, and they were affrighted.

6 And he ſaith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye ſeek Jeſus of Nazareth, which was crucified, he is not here: Behold the Place where they laid him.

7 But go your Way, tell his Diſciples and Peter, that he goeth before you into Galilee: there ſhall ye ſee him, as he ſaid unto you.

8 And they went out quickly, and fled from the Sepulchre; for they trembled, and were amazed: Neither ſaid they any Thing to any Man: For they were afraid.

9 Now when Jeſus was riſen early, the firſt Day of the Week, he appeared firſt to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had caſt ſeven Devils.

10 And ſhe went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept:

11 And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been ſeen of her, believed not.

St. John, Chap. XX.

1 The firſt Day of the Week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the Sepulchre, and ſeeth the Stone taken away from the Sepulchre.

2 Then ſhe runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other Diſciple whom Jeſus loved, and ſaith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the Sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.

3 Peter therefore went forth, and that other Diſciple, and came to the Sepulchre.

4 So they run both together: And the other Diſciple did outrun Peter, and came firſt to the Sepulchre.

5 And he ſtooping down, and looking in, ſaw the Linen Clothes lying, yet went he not in.

6 Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the Sepulchre, and ſeeth the Linen Clothes lie.

7 And the Napkin that was about his Head, not lying with the Linen Clothes, but wrapped together in a Place by itſelf.

8 Then went in alſo that other Diſciple which came firſt to the Sepulchre, and he ſaw and believed.

9 For as yet they knew not the Scripture, that he muſt riſe again from the Dead.

10 Then the Diſciples went away again unto their own home.

11 But Mary ſtood without at the Sepulchre weeping: And as ſhe wept, ſhe ſtooped down, and looked into the Sepulchre.

12 And ſeeth two Angels in white, ſitting the one at the Head, and the other at the Feet, where the Body of Jeſus had lain.

13 And they ſay unto her, Woman, why weepeſt thou? She ſaith unto them, Becauſe they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.

14 And when ſhe had thus ſaid, ſhe turned herſelf back, and ſaw Jeſus ſtanding, and knew not that it was Jeſus.

15 Jeſus ſaith unto her, Woman, why weepeſt thou? Whom ſeekeſt thou? She ſuppoſing him to be the Gardener, ſaith unto him, Sir, if thou haſt born him hence, tell me where thou haſt

laid

laid him, and I will take him away.

16 Jeſus ſaith unto her, Mary. She turned herſelf and ſaith unto him, Rabboni, that is to ſay, Maſter.

17 Jeſus ſaith unto her, Touch me not: For I am not yet aſcended to my Father: But go to my Brethren, and ſay unto them, I aſcend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.

18 Mary Magdalene came and told the Diſciples, that ſhe had ſeen the Lord, and that he had ſpoken theſe Things unto her.

St. Luke, Chap. XXIV.

1 Now upon the firſt Day of the Week, very early in the Morning, they came unto the Sepulchre, bringing the Spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.

2 And they found the Stone rolled away from the Sepulchre.

3 And they entered in, and found not the Body of the Lord Jeſus.

4 And it came to paſs, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold two Men ſtood by them in ſhining Garments.

5 And as they were afraid, and bowed down their Faces to the Earth, they ſaid unto them, Why ſeek ye the living among the Dead?

6 He is not here, he is riſen: Remember how he ſpake unto you when he was yet in Galilee,

7 Saying, The Son of Man muſt be delivered into the Hands of ſinful Men, and be crucified, and the third Day riſe again.

8 And they remembered his Words.

9 And returned from the Sepulchre, and told all theſe Things unto the Eleven, and to all the reſt.

10 It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the Mother of James, and other Women that were with them, which told theſe Things unto the Apoſtles.

11 And their Words ſeemed to them as idle Tales, and they believed them not.

12 Then aroſe Peter, and ran unto the Sepulchre, and ſtooping down, he beheld the Linen Clothes laid by themſelves, and departed, wondering in himſelf at that which was come to paſs.

II. *Of Chriſt's ſecond Appearance, which was to two Diſciples.*

13 And behold two of them went that ſame Day to a Village called Emmaus, which was from Jeruſalem about threeſcore Furlongs.

14 And they talked together of all theſe Things which had happened.

15 And it came to paſs, that while they communed together and reaſoned, Jeſus himſelf drew nigh, and went with them.

16 But their Eyes were holden, that they ſhould not know him.

17 And he ſaid unto them, What manner of Communications

are theſe that ye have one to another, as ye walk and are ſad?

18 And one of them, whoſe Name was Cleopas, anſwering, ſaid unto him, Art thou only a Stranger in Jeruſalem, and haſt not known the Things which are come to paſs there in theſe Days?

19 And he ſaid unto them, What Things? And they ſaid unto him concerning Jeſus of Nazareth, which was a Prophet mighty in Deed and Word before God, and all the People:

20 And how the chief Prieſts and our Rulers delivered him to be condemned to Death, and have crucified him.

21 But we truſted that it had been he which ſhould have redeemed Iſrael: And beſide all this, To-day is the third Day ſince theſe Things were done.

22 Yea, and certain Women alſo of our Company made us aſtoniſhed, which were early at the Sepulchre:

23 And when they found not his Body, they came, ſaying, that they had alſo ſeen a Viſion of Angels, which ſaid that he was alive.

24 And certain of them which were with us, went to the Sepulchre, and found it even ſo as the Women had ſaid; but him they ſaw not.

25 Then he ſaid unto them, O ye Fools, and ſlow of Heart to believe all that the Prophets have ſpoken!

26 Ought not Chriſt to have ſuffered theſe Things, and to enter into his Glory?

27 And beginning at Moſes and all the Prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures, the Things concerning himſelf.

28 And they drew nigh unto the Village, whither they went: And he made as though he would have gone further.

29 But they conſtrained him, ſaying, Abide with us, for it is towards Evening, and the Day is far ſpent: And he went in to tarry with them.

30 And it came to paſs, as he ſat at Meat with them, he took Bread and bleſſed it, and brake, and gave to them.

31 And their Eyes were opened, and they knew him, and he vaniſhed out of their Sight.

32 And they ſaid one to another, Did not our Heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the Way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?

33 And they roſe up the ſame Hour, and returned to Jeruſalem; and found the Eleven gathered together, and them that were with them,

34 Saying, The Lord is riſen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.

35 And they told what Things were done in the Way, and how he was known of them in breaking of Bread.

St. Mark, Chap. XVI.

12 After that he appeared in another Form to two of them, as they walked, and went into the Country.

13 And they went and told it to the Reſidue: Neither believed they them.

III. *Of*

III. *Of the Appearance of Jeſus which was to all the Apoſtles.*

St. Matthew, Chap. XXVIII.

16 Then the Eleven Diſciples went away into Galilee, into a Mountain, where Jeſus had appointed them.

17 And when they ſaw him, they worſhipped him; but ſome doubted.

18 And Jeſus came, and ſpake unto them, ſaying, All Power is given unto me in Heaven and in Earth.

19 Go ye, therefore, and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt.

20 Teaching them to obſerve all Things whatſoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always even to the End of the World.

St. Mark, Chap. XVI.

14 Afterward he appeared unto the Eleven, as they ſat at Meat, and upbraided them with their Unbelief, and Hardneſs of Heart, becauſe they believed not them which had ſeen him after he was riſen.

15 And he ſaid unto them, Go ye into all the World, and preach the Goſpel to every Creature.

16 He that believeth, and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved; but he that believeth not ſhall be damned.

17 And theſe Signs ſhall follow them that believe; in my Name they ſhall caſt out Devils, they ſhall ſpeak with new Tongues.

18 They ſhall take up Serpents, and if they drink any deadly Thing, it ſhall not hurt them; they ſhall lay Hands on the Sick, and they ſhall recover.

19 So then after the Lord had ſpoken unto them, he was received up into Heaven, and ſat on the right Hand of God.

20 And they went forth and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with Signs following. Amen.

St. Luke, Chap. XXIV.

36 And as they thus ſpake, Jeſus himſelf ſtood in the Midſt of them, and ſaith unto them, Peace be unto you.

37 But they were terrified and affrighted, and ſuppoſed that they had ſeen a Spirit.

38 And he ſaid unto them, Why are ye troubled? And why do Thoughts riſe in your Hearts?

39 Behold my Hands and my Feet, that it is I myſelf: Handle me, and ſee, for a Spirit hath not Fleſh and Bones, as ye ſee me have.

40 And when he had thus ſpoken, he ſhewed them his Hands and his Feet.

41 And while they yet believed not for Joy, and wondered, he ſaid unto them, Have ye here any Meat?

42 And they gave him a Piece of a broiled Fiſh, and of an Honey-comb.

43 And he took it, and did eat before them.

44 And he ſaid unto them, Theſe are the Words that I ſpake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all Things muſt be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moſes, and in the Prophets, and in the Pſalms concerning me.

45 Then opened he their Underſtanding, that they might underſtand the Scriptures,

46 And ſaid unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Chriſt to ſuffer, and to riſe from the Dead the third Day:

47 And that Repentance and Remiſſion of Sins ſhould be preached in his Name among all Nations, beginning at Jeruſalem.

48 And ye are Witneſſes of theſe Things.

49 And behold, I ſend the Promiſe of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the City of Jeruſalem, until ye be endued with Power from on high.

50 And he led them out as far as Bethany: And he lift up his Hands and bleſſed them.

51 And it came to paſs while he bleſſed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven.

52 And they worſhipped him, and returned to Jeruſalem with great Joy:

53 And were continually in the Temple, praiſing and bleſſing God. Amen.

St. John, Chap. XX.

19 Then the ſame Day at Evening, being the firſt Day of the Week, when the Doors were ſhut, where the Diſciples were aſſembled for Fear of the Jews, came Jeſus and ſtood in the Midſt, and ſaith unto them, Peace be unto you.

20 And when he had ſo ſaid, he ſhewed unto them his Hands and his Side. Then were the Diſciples glad when they ſaw the Lord.

21 Then ſaid Jeſus unto them again, Peace be unto you: As my Father hath ſent me, even ſo ſend I you.

22 And when he had ſaid this, he breathed on them, and ſaith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghoſt.

23 Whoſe ſoever Sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whoſe ſoever Sins ye retain, they are retained.

Another Appearance.

24 But Thomas, one of the Twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jeſus came.

25 The other Diſciples therefore ſaid unto him, We have ſeen the Lord. But he ſaid unto them, Except I ſhall ſee in his Hands the Print of the Nails, and put my Finger into the Print of the Nails, and thruſt my Hand into his Side, I will not believe.

26 And after eight Days again his Diſciples were within, and Thomas with them: Then came Jeſus, the Doors being ſhut, and ſtood in the Midſt, and ſaid, Peace be unto you.

27 Then ſaid he to Thomas, Reach hither thy Finger, and behold my Hands; and reach hither thy Hand, and thruſt it into my Side; and be not faithleſs, but believing.

28 And

28 And Thomas anſwered and ſaid unto him, My Lord and my God.

29 Jeſus ſaith unto him, Thomas, becauſe thou haſt ſeen me, thou haſt believed: Bleſſed are they that have not ſeen, and yet have believed.

St. John relates another Appearance of Jeſus after this, to ſeven Diſciples at the Sea of Tiberias, where he wrought a Miracle in catching Fiſh, and dined with them. Confirmed Peter in his Love, and bade him follow him, but where is not ſaid. This is Jeſus's third and laſt Appearance to his Diſciples, according to St. John, Chap. xxi.

The ACTS *of the* APOSTLES.

CHAP. I.

1 The former Treatiſe have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jeſus began both to do and teach.

2 Until the Day in which he was taken up, after that he, thro' the Holy Ghoſt, had given commandments unto the Apoſtles whom he had choſen.

3 To whom alſo he ſhewed himſelf alive after his Paſſion, by many infallible Proofs, being ſeen of them forty Days, and ſpeaking of the Things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.

4 And being aſſembled together with them, commanded them that they ſhould not depart from Jeruſalem, but wait for the Promiſe of the Father, which, ſaith he, ye have heard of me.

5 For John truly baptized with Water; but ye ſhall be baptized with the Holy Ghoſt not many Days hence.

6 When they therefore were come together, they aſked him, ſaying, Lord, wilt thou at this time reſtore again the Kingdom to Iſrael?

7 And he ſaid unto them, It is not for you to know the Times or the Seaſons, which the Father hath put in his own Power.

8 But ye ſhall receive Power after that the Holy Ghoſt is come upon you, and ye ſhall be Witneſſes unto me both in Jeruſalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermoſt Parts of the Earth.

9 And when he had ſpoken theſe Things, while they beheld, he was taken up, and a Cloud received him out of their Sight.

I. Corinthians, Chap. XV.

3 I delivered unto you firſt of all, that which I alſo received, how that Chriſt died for our Sins, according to the Scriptures.

4 And that he was buried, and that he roſe again the third Day, according to the Scriptures:

5 And that he was ſeen of Cephas, then of the Twelve.

6 After that, he was ſeen of above five hundred Brethren at once: Of whom the greater Part remain unto this preſent, but ſome are fallen aſleep.

7 After that, he was ſeen of James; then of all the Apoſtles.

8 And laſt of all, he was ſeen of me alſo, as of one born out of due Time.

THE

THE RESURRECTION RECONSIDERED.

BEING AN

ANSWER

TO THE

CLEARER AND OTHERS.

By Way of DIALOGUE between the

CONSIDERER AND HIS FRIEND.

By the AUTHOR of, *The Reſurrection of* JESUS *Conſidered, in Anſwer to the Trial of the Witneſſes.*

Quod ſupereſt, vacuas aureis mihi Memmiada, et te
Semotum à curis adhibe veram ad rationem,
Ne mea dona tibi ſtudio diſpoſta fideli,
Intellecta prius quam ſint contemta relinquas. ——— LUCRET.

Thou Reader, who art free from other Cares,
Receive right Reaſon's Truth with well-purg'd Ears;
Leſt what I write, and ſend you for your Good,
Be ſcorn'd and damn'd before well underſtood.

LONDON:

Printed for the AUTHOR; and Sold by M. COOPER in *Pater-Noſter-Row*, and the Bookſellers of *London* and *Weſtminiſter*.

M DCC XLIV.

THE INTRODUCTION.

READER,

WHOEVER thou art that lookeſt into this Controverſy, by whatever Curioſity induced; Curioſity leads to Freedom, to Knowledge, to Truth, and to Felicity. No Being can go further, none deſires it: I ſay, whoever thou art, tread prudently the Path that leads to Happineſs; be not raſh to condemn unheard, nor paſs the Sentence of Ignorance againſt that Truth, which fears not thy moſt impartal Inſpection, thy niceſt Scrutiny, thy profoundeſt Search, but earneſtly calls for it, and eagerly courts it; which deſires nothing more, and fears nothing leſs. Look with a human Eye over human Frailties: Do not expect that Perfection in *Infidels*, by the Aſſiſtance of their *Reaſon*, which you cannot find in *Believers*, aſſiſted with their *Holy Ghoſt:* Be not ſo unreaſonably partial, ſo ſtupidly deluded, to expect thoſe to work Miracles, who deny the Power of doing them. Take us as we are, as yourſelves are, Men with human Failings: We pretend to no Authority above you, no extraordinary Gifts that you have not, are no more the Almighty's Favourites than you; do not deceive yourſelves by imagining you are more ſo, than we: If you fancy you are, and call this fancy, Faith, New Birth, the Operations of Grace, the Work of the Spirit, and ſuch like; *Come now, and let us Reaſon together*, as, in the Name of the Lord, ſaid the Prophet *Iſaiah:* And the God that anſwers by Fire, by the fiery Trial of Examination, by the ſpiritual Light of penetrating and diſtinguiſhing Reaſon, by clear convincing Argument, Let him be God; LET THAT BE TRUTH: And let the contrary Side be looked upon, as it is, pious Fraud, bold Impoſture, and ſtrong Deluſion.

This Argument has no evil Tendency, as ſome may imagine, to deſtroy all Religion: On the contrary, it tends to eſtabliſh true Religion, by the Diſcovery of Truth, to ſhew that 'its not the mere Effect of Credulity erected on the Baſis of an hiſtorical Faith; but that its Foundation is in, and not out of Nature: For if you would mount as high as the aſpiring Ladder of Man's ſublimeſt Stretch of Judgment can carry you, 'tis Nature all the way: Beyond it no Philoſopher, but Fools preſume, if the Preſumption be ſincere; Knaves if it be not.

not. The Tendency of this Argument will be to lead us to enquire, Whether Religion ſhould be founded on the Reaſon and Nature of Things, or on thoſe that have neither Nature nor Reaſon for their Foundation, Proof, or Plea; which have no natural Tendency to civilize Mens Manners, nor illuminate their Minds. This Argument will plainly diſcover, that the Relation we ſtand in one towards another, and the Fitneſs of Behaviour thoſe ſeveral Relations require, unalterably declare what the Will of God and Man's Duty is: That Mens Ignorance that this is Truth, and of what this Truth informs us, is owing to their neglecting the proper Uſe of their Ratiocination: Seeking the one pure and plain Religion elſewhere, leads Men out of it. ANOTHER TRUE FOUNDATION CAN NO MAN LAY, THAN THAT WHICH GOD HAS EVER LAID IN NATURE.

Traditional and Hiſtorical Facts may be precarious and uncertain; and the moſt wonderful are the moſt improbable. If the Laws of Nature are unchangeable, no Work can be wrought contrary to them; nor can they contradict themſelves. If changeable, there can be no Dependance on any Thing: For what can interfere or ſet them aſide, muſt of Neceſſity ſet aſide all Criterions of Truth, and all poſſible Knowledge of it. If then there be any Truth that may be depended on, what is founded on this Bottom, muſt remain evidently, and unchangeably ſo, till Nature changes, and can ſuffer no Mutation by Miracles. Nature is obſtinate, and parts with its Frame, when it parts with its Quality: It cannot diveſt itſelf of itſelf. And that which may be ſuppoſed, or imagined able to do it, is altogether mere Suppoſition and Imagination: Becauſe it can be only ſaid, not proved: And all ſuch are at beſt but precarious Principles. The Argument on my Side, then, is ſo far from being pernicious, or deſtructive of Religion, that it tends to fix it on true, ſolid, and eternal Principles; which are every where of the ſame Importance, Stability and Luſtre.

The ſocial Duties of Mankind are eaſy to be underſtood, fit to be practiſed, and productive of Felicity: Their Plainneſs ſhews their Fitneſs and Uſefulneſs, and their Tendency diſcovers their Lovelineſs and Excellency: Were they obſcure, intricate, and myſterious, their Fitneſs would be difficult to apprehend; their Uſefulneſs to promote Man's mutual and ſocial Happineſs would not appear. Myſtery and Obſcurity are not productive of Knowledge. Thoſe are the Regions of Impoſition and Ignorance, where Reaſon is condemned. In this Dominion therefore, Knaves only reign, and only Fools obey; and what real Goodneſs can keep ſuch Company? Religion, which is not natural is artificial, and is made up of Invention and Myſtery; this is a Market in which the Liberties, Properties, and Souls of Men are bought and ſold: By their Fruits you ſhall know them: 'Tis beneficial to the Teachers, but prejudicial in Practice. The Doctors gain what the Diſciples loſe by it; the more Poverty the ſtupid Believers embrace, the

the more Opulence and Luxury the Preachers enjoy: The more the Convert gives, the more the Church receives. All in a falſe Religion are ſheepiſh Prey, or raveuing Wolves: But the True, is natural and divine, agreeable to, and worthy of God and Nature, pure, plain, and perfect, of moſt Advantage to thoſe that practiſe it beſt. The artificial Religion puzzles and confounds the Student, it bewilders him in a Maze of Confuſion in the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and Uncertainty of Right and Wrong. But that of Nature clears his Apprehenſions, and informs his Judgment, producing Satisfaction and Serenity, Joy and Tranquility. Reaſon and Nature uncorrupted by bad Education, or regenerated from it, afford the Poſſeſſor Pleaſures pure, diſpaſſionate, and harmonious; by diſpaſſionate, I mean, a calm and ſerene Joy, which is always the ſame as to Quality, tho' not as to Meaſure; widely different from the Girds and Starts, and convulſive Raptures of Saints, which high Tide of the Spirits rolling rapidly on, leaves the Channel dry. Not ſo the Charms of Philoſophy, it has all the Majeſty and Harmony of Divinity within; and without, 'tis all manly, juſt, and good. But Religion, formed by human Inventions, produces Perplexity, Perturbation, and Diſcord, which Men fear to keep, and fear to part with; becauſe 'tis founded on precarious Principles, and at Times is a Hell within to their Souls, as well as occaſions a Hell without to the World: What Horrors has it not begotten? What Iniquity has it not brought forth? By its Fruits you ſhall know it.

Of how much more Importance the Subject is, or is repreſented to be, the Enquiry is ſo much the more reaſonable and neceſſary. Where no Examination is, there is no Proof of Truth, nor underſtanding of it. Where no Search is, nothing can be found but by Accident, and ſeldom in this State is rightly known; therefore not rightly valued, or eſteemed. Where no Knowledge is required, no true Judgment formed, no mental Faculties improved, Truth is not found. Precious Jewels do not lay open to every Eye. Trees that produce the moſt delicious Fruits muſt be cultivated; and Plants that bring forth the fineſt Flowers muſt be carefully managed. TRUTH is the moſt inviting Fruit, and the moſt beautiful Flower that adorns the *Elyſian* Fields, and Beds of Paradiſe: Its natural Soil is the human Mind. It is worth while to thoſe that prize the moſt valuable Thing, to cultivate the Garden of their Minds, to plant therein the Seed of Knowledge, and water the Sprig of Underſtanding, that the Divine Fragrancy may flow out: So thou Reader ſhalt be filled with God, and the Rays of the Divinity will enoble thy Thoughts, adorn thy Speech, and direct thy Ways. See to it then what Sort of Religion or Principles you embrace, and be very wary what you take upon Truſt. A Religion built on fallible, human Tradition, is fallible, and human. Why ſhould that be infallibly depended on, or how can that be

ſafely

ſafely credited, which is not erected on infallible Principles, but on Things that are, or may be uncertain; or if they are true, we cannot know them to be ſo? Obſcurity and Uncertainty are the beſt Cloaks for Error to wrap itſelf in. Cuſtom introduced by Tradition, conſecrates and gives it a Sanction. But fundamental Principles of Truths, neceſſary for Man's Knowledge, are clear, and certain: True Philoſophy founded on Nature's Laws, preſents to Man's View an infallible Rule of uſeful Knowledge, and right Conduct. This is the ſecureſt Reſt, the ſafeſt Retreat from the Tempeſt of giddy Opinions, that as Rocks, deſtroy Mens Reaſon, and as Sands, ſwallow up their Underſtandings. Thoſe Laws of Religion which demand the Obedience of all, ſhould be evident enough to convince the Reaſon of all. To be enjoined to believe what is not only precarious, but improbable, or to be damned, is Cauſe ſufficient to reject the Impoſition. There is a World of Reaſon to deſpiſe that Authority, which deſpiſes the Authority of the Reaſon of the World; and what makes no Uſe of Man's rational Faculty, renders it uſeleſs: Theſe Powers not exerciſed, are rejected. And if aught elſe is preferred in their Stead, it is to thruſt them out. No Man can love God the Giver, that diſeſteems or neglects Reaſon, which is his Gift; for all that can be known of God by Man is known only by this Light. This is all the Image Man has of the Divinity, 'tis this alone which exalts him above all other Creatures on this Globe. This is the Ray of Heaven in Man, which NEVER WAS, NOR CAN BE excelled by any ſupernatural Revelation, pretended, or real; for a greater, or more glaring Light muſt dazzle the human Mind, but cannot enlighten it. If greater ever was, or could be given, that it may be made ſerviceable, it muſt be made rational: A leſs cannot direct Men, and a greater muſt diſtract them: Both theſe diſplay no Certainty, or Truth. What is above our Comprehenſion, is of no Uſe to us. And thoſe Things that puzzle the Wit of Man to reconcile, and defend, which if they could be done, are no clue to guide the reaſonable Mind to Wiſdom and Virtue, are of no Service to Man, tho' long Harangues may be made thereon: For what Truth is it, the Wit of Man cannot contradict? Or what Falſehood is that, which he cannot ſay ſomething in Favour of? But I am ſenſible all that can be ſaid, will be to little Purpoſe to diſprove the plain Dictates of natural Reaſon, to thoſe that can ſee the Light of it. In the Caſe of Religion, there is no Medium; what is not infallibly right, is infallibly wrong. Therefore this Enquiry tends to found Religion on the Baſis of Reaſon, and right Action, on fixed and eternal Principles; tho' it may chance to ſubvert the falſe Foundation of an Hiſtorical Faith, on which the Deities of *Jupiter Ammon*, the *Delphic Apollo*, the *Epheſian Diana*, and every Man-made God, or Woman Goddeſs, that ever was in the World were founded. If Traditional Faith be ſacred, without the ſcrutinizing Eye of Profane Reaſon, their Divinities

are

are unqueſtionably equal. Or if the Belief of romantic Facts, and abſurd Notions, will awe a Man into Godlineſs, no doubt but Faith in any of thoſe Gods had a very godly Tendency.

Mr. *Tipping Silveſter*, like an honeſt Church-man, has wrote his *Evidence of the Reſurrection of Jeſus vindicated* for the Uſe of the Church; therefore, I ſhall ſay but little to it, being determined not to rob it of ſuch a Treaſure, but leave him and the Church in quiet Poſſeſſion of ſuch Arguments as are fit for them only to uſe. Yet, as I go along, if I find any Thing worthy my Notice, I ſhall take it into Conſideration: And if I meet with any *Blunders and Errors* in my Way, (to one Kind or other of which all Men are ſubject) I intend either to paſs them over in Silence, or treat them in a manner not unbecoming the Dignity of a MORAL PHILOSOPHER.

Mr. *Samuel Chandler* has pretended to anſwer the Reſurrection conſidered without naming the Book, out of a pious Care to his Readers poor Souls, leſt they ſhould eat of the Tree of Knowledge, and be damned by our Lord God the Prieſt, who is the only Lord God that ever prohibited the Feeding on that Fruit; or leſt they ſhould eat of the Tree of Life, that is, the Tree of Underſtanding, (*Prov.* iii. 18.) and live for ever without Dependence on his Inſtructions, and the ſervile Fear of his woful Denunciation, of being expelled the Paradiſe of Fools. For a general Confutation of all he has ſaid, I ſhall only ſhew how he has done it himſelf: His verboſe Work is laboured Quibbles, ſtrained Senſe, far fetched Meanings, Gueſſes, and prooſleſs Aſſertions inſtead of Arguments. And being conſcious to himſelf that he has wrote much and little to the Purpoſe, he *reſts the Matter with* his *Reader ſoon, to conſider what is of* REAL WEIGHT OR CONSEQUENCE; (p. 170.) ſo that this Piece of his, is of no *real Weight or Conſequence*, becauſe what he allows to be ſuch, is yet to come. But as his Heat has ſinged his Reputation, as a Writer, to defend the Character of *Joſeph* and his Brethren; I am apprehenſive he will have enough to do to juſtify his own and theirs.

Mr. *Chandler*, in his Sermon, on the neceſſary and immutable Difference between moral Good and Evil aſſerted and explained ſays, p. 36.

1. *We may ſee the great Wiſdom of God, and his great Goodneſs to Mankind, in making thoſe Things, which are of the greateſt Importance to them, and in which their Duty and Happineſs is moſt directly and eſſentially concerned, to be ſo exceeding evident and plain to them, as that if they will but diſtinguiſh and diſcern them, as they can any ſenſible Objects with their Eyes, or ſuch Things as are pleaſant and wholſome, by their Taſte and Palate.* Therefore moral Knowledge and Practice is of the greateſt Importance, and that Faith the leaſt, that is the leaſt evident.

2. *We may infer from what hath been ſaid, how ſtrong and unchangeable all Men's Obligations are to the Practice of Religion and Virtue; as unchangeable as the very Nature and Reaſon of Things, and as their Inclinations are to purſue Pleaſure before Pain, and to embrace Happi-*

neſs

neſs in Preference to Miſery. If Religion and Virtue are founded on the ſtrong and unchangeable Obligations of the very Nature and Reaſon of Things, then that Faith, which is contrary to the Nature and Reaſon of Things, is no Religion nor Virtue; and conſequently, there is no Obligation in Reaſon or Nature to receive it.

3. *We may infer the great Folly and Abſurdity of Men's giving favourable Names to Vice, and endeavouring to ſcreen the Malignity and Deformity of it, by the honourable Appellations of Virtue.—Thus ſome Men, who are* ſordidly penurious *and covetous, would fain have it all paſs for* Frugality, *and the commendable Care of their Families and Friends. Revelling and* Drunkenneſs *is changed into* Good-nature and Fellowſhip. Lewdneſs *wears the genteel Name of* Gallantry *and Politeneſs.* Ambition *and* Envy *cover their Deformity, and become reputable and popular, by putting on the Garb and Merit of* Patriotiſm. Cenſure *and Reproach, Reviling and Scandal put off their Fury Dreſs, and make their Appearance in the ſacred Habit of* Sanctity and Zeal. *Thus changed, not in Nature, but Appearance and Name, Vice is ſometimes embraced and harboured as a Heavenly Virtue. But is not ſuch a Conduct an Argument of the extremeſt Folly? Can any one imagine, that by miſcalling Vice, they can transform it into a real Perfection, and thus confound the unalterable Nature and Differences of Things? Should Satan areſs himſelf like an Angel of Light, he would be Satan ſtill; his Nature would continue the ſame, though his Appearance was altered; and his Qualities be truly deviliſh, under the moſt radiant Dreſs of celeſtial Glory,* &c.—I may add, a *ſtupid Credulity*, the Belief of Lies and Nonſenſe, wears the ſanctified Maſk of *Faith in God*, and Dependance on his Word: Further to apply this in almoſt his own Words: Whatever is *contrary to God and his Laws, to the Truth and Reaſon, and the immutable Nature of Things, and to the true Honour of* God *and Happineſs of* Men, *palliate it as much as you pleaſe, and call it by whatever favourable Names you will, harbour it in your Breaſts and it will defile you: Indulge it in your Lives, and it will ſink you under ſubſtantial Guilt: Compare it with the Rule of Reaſon and the Law of God,* (that is, the known Laws of Nature, the eternal Rules of the Relations and Fitneſs of Things) *and it will immediately appear in its true Deformity.*

All this may be ſaid of that Faith which is ſet in the room of, and ſubſtituted for Righteouſneſs. If Faith be not in itſelf Righteouſneſs, to impute or eſteem it ſuch, is a Deception, is Hypocriſy, and conſequently a very malignant Vice. Thus Faith makes Men believe they are what they are not, that they are really righteous, when they are habitually wicked. I ſay habitually, for it muſt be Habitude in Ignorance that can thus debauch the Underſtanding, and debaſe their Reaſoning Faculties; thus to put one Thing for another, 'tis calling Evil Good, and Good Evil; 'tis palpably putting Darkneſs for Light, and Light for Darkneſs, to repreſent as ſome do, that all Men's good Works or moral Righteouſneſs out of, or without Faith, is Sin; but that *Faith itſelf is Righteouſneſs without Works.* This is an unrighteous Cheat to obſtund

obtund the Pangs of Conſcience, and exclude the Rays of Reaſon from enlightening it. How can believing a Story that is told, be Holineſs? Belief and Holineſs are different Things: That there is Virtue, Value, Merit, Worth, or Righteouſneſs, in barely believing a Set of Principles, or a certain Story, is Partiality, and Partiality is a Sin; 'tis to be partial in Judgment, which is an unrighteous Thing. So that 'tis ſo far from being Righteouſneſs, that 'tis the very contrary. That the embracing a certain Opinion ſhould bring one into the good Opinion of Deity, is ſurely to be much opinionated; this ſavours of little Reaſon and much Self-conceit. One would ſcarce believe this to be as true as the Goſpel, if one did not know it to be Goſpel, or if the Preachers of the Goſpel did not affirm it to be ſo. But ſurely it is falſe Righteouſneſs to believe a falſe Story, if it be true Righteouſneſs to believe Truth. If this be the Point, that Faith is Virtue, or Virtue Faith; which however will not be granted by me till I ſee it proved. How careful ſhould Men be that they are not deceived in having that true Faith or Righteouſneſs which is acceptable to God, and not by Faith be deluded with ſpiritual Sorcery, with a Faith that upon Examination proves manifeſtly wrong. To believe Things diſhonourable of God, is ſurely bringing no Honour to him; and is, I think, if any Thing be, a Sin againſt God. As to believe God cannot, or will not ſhew Mercy to guilty Perſons, unleſs he takes Vengeance on an innocent Perſon; that he will not ſave the Unrighteous, unleſs he condemns the Righteous; that God the Father is not good nor beneficent to Man, unleſs God the Son makes him ſo; and that God the Holy Ghoſt is implacable, and will not forgive Sins committed againſt himſelf; nor the Son forgive thoſe that do not believe in him. Is this Faith called Righteouſneſs which makes the Gods unrighteous! And is this the Faith that muſt ſave Mankind, which damns both Gods and Men. Lord ſave us Infidels, or we periſh! O good God, we can ſooner be damned, than have ſo damned an Opinion of thee, ſo unrighteous a Faith, and believe it Righteouſneſs. Why didſt thou not, O God, make us as ſtupid as Believers, that we might believe theſe Things and be ſaved. If thou art no more gracious than thy Worſhippers make thee, thou wilt have but little Worſhip from us, however fond thou mayeſt be of human Worſhip: We will not ſeek other Gods to provoke thee to Jealouſy and Anger: We ſhall ſooner herd with Atheiſts, and believe with Fools, that there is no God, than that there is ſuch a God as Knaves repreſent thee. And if thou damn us for this, we are damned with a good Conſcience, and Hell cannot be Hell if that be there. So that if our Bodies be quiet, our Souls will be ſafe enough. If there is no material Fire in Hell, there is no Immaterial that can hurt honeſt Infidels.

Why ſhould any People's believing what they are told, make them more pleaſing to their Maker than thoſe that do not: That think with Reaſon the Story had not

not God for its Maker; and if it had, Man has told it since; and if it be truly said, that *every Man is a Liar*, then to believe any Story, not immediately told from God himself, is not believing in God, but believing a Liar. But is crediting Things with Reason, or not giving Credit to them without, not having Faith in God? Or does taking Things upon Trust make us the wiser or the better Men, certainly the contrary; for it makes us the more stupid, and what Villainy may not a stupid Wretch commit! Implicit Faith then is so far from making Men better, that it makes them worse, it makes them Fools, and may render them Villains. Add to the Stupidity of the righteousness of Faith, a Measure of godly Zeal, and these two religious Qualities, are capable of making any People the vilest in every Respect that it is possible they can be: No Ingredients from the Sink of Hell can make them more compleat Devils, or more infernal Furies.

He that believes and vindicates false Things, is an Enemy to Truth. He that believes what is dishonourable to God, and pernicious to right Action, embraces ungodly and unjust Principles, and these put into Practice, he is unrighteous in Fact. 'Tis no Wonder, if such an evil Tree has produced so much evil Fruit. Sentiments contrary to Truth and good Manners cannot be good, cannot be of God, if God be good. *Men do not gather Grapes of Thorns, nor Figs of Thistles:* And as you may know the Tree by its Fruits, so you may know the Fruits by the Tree if ever it be pregnant. *Be not deceived, evil Communications corrupt good Manners.* Why has any one Religion been worse in its Consequences than any other? It must be because it was worse in its Nature. The Child commonly takes after the Parent, bad Practices naturally flow from bad Principles. There is no Evil done so heartily as the Evil that is done for God's Sake; nothing but the most perverted Faith can teach Men to hate Father and Mother, and Wife and Brethren, and Children, and one's own Life for the Cause of Religion: 'Tis Irreligion in the most pernicious Degree. No Sort of Religion can require it but the most assuming Tyranny; and no religious Creature can practice it, but such as are sunk into the most abject Slavery, into the Dregs of spiritual Infatuation, and enthusiastic Bigotry. That Faith then that is not right, is unrighteous; and therefore is so far from being Righteousness, that it is Sin to harbour it, the very Seed of Sin, a Serpent in one's Bosom. Let a heavenly Ardour then, O Reader, rouse your lethargic Soul, bruise its Head, and break its Yoke from off your Neck; for this is the Cause of Truth, of Goodness itself, and of pure Religion: For though Men may believe bad Things, and practice good; may entertain a false Faith, and yet love Truth; it is because they are ignorant that their Belief is false, and therefore naturally prejudicial to Truth, and productive of Evil. *Let us then* (in Mr. *Chandler*'s Words) *return to the original Truth and Simplicity of Things; nor deceive ourselves by misrepresenting or overlooking them. Let Scandal,*

dal, Reproach, Cenſorioufneſs, and raſh Judgment ever be abhorred as certain Proofs of a diſtempered, envious, and bigoted Mind; and as ſure Marks not of a religious, but of an enthuſiaſtic and ſuperſtitious Zeal, that hath neither Knowledge to enliven it, nor Reaſon, Humanity, or Conſcience to direct it.

That the Truth of a Religion ſhould be founded on barely believing it to be true, ſhews its Foundation is eſtabliſhed on Credit; and that if it be diſcredited, the Truth diſappears. To ſay that Belief is the Baſis of Man's Acceptance with God, is to ſay that our Acceptance with God is imaginary. To ſuppoſe Faith to be Man's principle Virtue, or Righteouſneſs, is to deſtroy the very Nature of Virtue, and of Righteouſneſs: For this conſiſts in Purity of Heart and Manners, but much Faith may be where there is little Goodneſs, or none at all; therefore Goodneſs and Faith are diſtinct Things. And, indeed the Men of Faith give it up, for they dare not ſtand the Battle, they never enter the Liſts of Diſputation with us. Our Contention is only with thoſe that have mixed Reaſon with Faith, that have made a Linſey-woolſey Garment; and, like the old *Samaritans*, worſhip the Lord and their own Gods.

I ſhall conclude with obſerving the Arts made Uſe of for Arguments, by thoſe who are on the wrong Side of Reaſon, which the CLEARER and others in this Controverſy furniſh me with the Knowledge of.

1. To miſrepreſent their Adverſaries Arguments, Meaning, and Intention, by preſenting Things in falſe Lights and Colours, in order to confound and puzzle the Cauſe, by a Maze of little Artifices not eaſily to be deſcribed, to delude the Underſtanding of the Readers.

2. To ſtrain the apparent Senſe of Scripture when it does not ſuit their Purpoſe, which, if it cannot be done by the *Engliſh* Tranſlation, to give ſuch a new Interpretation to the Language of the original Text, (as without being reduced to an Extremity themſelves, would never have thought of) to make it ſpeak different from what it does: And to charge their Adverſaries with wreſting the Senſe of the Scriptures, who by taking it in its own natural Senſe, plain to common Underſtandings, ſhew to them their own Abſurdities.

3. To render contemptible what they cannot anſwer, to uſe any Sort of mean Inſinuations to diſcredit their Adverſaries; thus Infamy ſometimes paſſes for Argument, and the Detraction of a Man's Character, Qualifications, or Abilities, for the Determination of the Debate.

4. To confound the Reaſon of the Subject with a Multitude of Words, as Dr. *Garth* ſays, is the Practice of Quacks in other Caſes:

The Patient's Ears remorſeleſs he aſſails,
Murders with Jargon when his Medicine fails.

5. To ſlip ſoftly and ſilently over the moſt weighty and eſſential Points, and to make the moſt of the leaſt Advantage; to triumph and inſult over the leaſt Slip, as if that very Error, tho'

of no Conſequence to the Point in Debate, was the very Life and Soul of it, and that conquering Point, which gained them an entire Victory.

6. To take Queſtions begged, for Things granted; Aſſertions, for Proofs; and the Evidence excepted againſt, to prove Facts in Diſpute, as indiſputable Evidence; and from thence to argue and harangue, in order to ſtir up the Prejudices of Education, and inflame the Paſſions of thoſe, whoſe Underſtandings being deluded with their Leaders mock Piety, romantic Divinity, and oſtentatious Shew of Devotion for the pretended good of Souls, are ever devoted to their Service. By theſe little Arts they are ſecure of Victory, and ever gain the Aſcendant in the Judgments of thoſe that are determined humbly to obey, and be under the Direction of their ſpiritual Commanders.

THE

THE

Reſurrection Re-conſidered:

IN A

DIALOGUE

BETWEEN THE

CONSIDERER AND HIS FRIEND.

Conſ. I Rejoice to ſee you my verygood Friend! This is an acceptable Viſit, and the more ſo, becauſe you come at a Time when I have Leiſure for Converſation, and wanted an agreeable Companion. I hope you are come to ſpend the Evening with me.

Friend. I am ſo, and the Joy is reciprocal; what you receive, you give; ſo both are Gainers.

C. Nothing can be more agreeable to me than ſuch a Viſit from ſuch a Friend. Come, ſit down.

F. This happens according to my Wiſh, that I have found you thus at Leiſure; for I am come to diſcourſe with you on an Affair of Importance, which you are concerned in.

C. 'Tis an Inſtance of great Favour and Friendſhip.

F. But as our Friendſhip, ſo our Concern is mutual.

C. Frankly diſcloſe it then, without Ceremony or further Delay.

F. I am come to diſcourſe with you concerning *The Reſurrection Cleared*, and your other Opponents, in a grave and ſerious manner; becauſe, in *the Reſurrection of Jeſus Conſidered*, they complain of your uſing ſo ſerious a Subject with too much Levity.

C. They will always find Occaſions of Complaint, let a Subject be handled as it will. Their preſent Intereſt in it, makes them affect Gravity; which is to me an Occaſion of Laughter, to obſerve how ſeriouſly they jeſt.

F. They complain of this Diſpoſition of yours as Ill-manners, in expoſing ſuch grave Subjects to Ridicule.

C. They are grave indeed to him that believes them, but as I happen not to be of the Number, I cannot think myſelf guilty of the Impeachment. Suppoſe I was diſturbed in my Brain, ought I to eſteem my Phyſician guilty of Ill-manners, becauſe he preſcribes Diverſions for my Cure. This Complaint is all a Jeſt: I think I have treated the Subject devoutly. The Defenders always complain of the manner of doing it, becauſe they would not have the Matter enquired into at all: Therefore it is no Wonder that all who have ever wrote on theſe Subjects, have been complained of as treating them diſagreeably. They think it Ill-manners not to ſwallow the whole, but none to ſlander and abuſe thoſe that cannot. They can bear no Ridicule in theſe Affairs, but delight to ſee whole Volleys of Satyr and Lampoon diſcharged on Subjects which not themſelves, but others eſteem ſacred, as if they thought it the beſt Way of expoſing ſerious Folly. Beſides, too much Seriouſneſs is Sourneſs; I think, to be pleaſant and ſincere, renders a Man's Company the moſt agreeable.

F. But I would not only talk with you of the manner of handling the Subject, but of the Matter, or Subject itſelf: I would propoſe the *Clearer*'s Arguments, and hear your Anſwers. Whereby you may do Juſtice to yourſelf, and give Satisfaction to an enquiring Friend.

C. Come on, I like the Propoſal, have read the Book, and there it is. Pray do not omit any Thing in it that is remarkably good or bad, true or falſe.

F. May your Conduct equal your Courage: Prepare, and expect no Favour.

C. I am prepared.

F. The *Clearer* in the Beginning of his Book repreſents you *in Diſtreſs*, and p. 17. *complaining grievouſly that all the Evidence is on the Side of the Reſurrection.*

C. I believe the Defenders have more Cauſe to make grievous Complaints that what Evidence they have is no better, and find themſelves in greater Diſtreſs how to make it harmonize than they could wiſh. The Diſtreſs is apparently on their Side, but he ſays this, that it may be thought to be on mine, though I find myſelf in none about it; and do not doubt but they would willingly change Sides, provided they could keep their Livings. 'Tis well for them that the keeping them does not depend on their proving the Fact in Queſtion; if ſo, they would be diſtreſſed indeed. I muſt own it is a great Hardſhip on the Clergy, that they are obliged to profeſs to believe what is out of their Power, as reaſonable Men; for Faith is not formed by the Will, but the Judgment. I think, therefore, that theſe of all Men are the moſt to be pitied, who are neceſſitated to ſell their Liberties for their Livings. But if inſtead of being enjoined to believe what they profeſs, they were allowed to profeſs what they believe, to worſhip God, and inſtruct Man, *any Way* which might be conducive to the common Tranquility, according to their Conſciences and Judgments, no Men could themſelves be, or make others more happy. This would as much encourage Learning and Knowledge, as the impoſing certain

tain Modes of Faith and Worſhip tends to diſcountenance them, by ſtinting Mens Underſtandings.

F. You ſeem to have a Latitudinarian Faith.

C. 'Tis agreeable to the Goſpel. There I read that *Jeſus* was an Enemy to his Diſciples exerciſing Authority over one another; *Ye know*, ſaid he to them, *that the Princes of the* Gentiles *exerciſe Dominion over them, and they that are great, exerciſe Authority over them. But it ſhall not be ſo among you: But whoſoever will be great among you, let him be your Miniſter; and whoſoever will be Chief among you, let him be your Servant.* You ſee the Goſpel Government is a Republic where all under *Jeſus* are equal: And he has not as a King ſubſtituted any Vice-roy in his Room. But let us return.

F. The *Clearer* ſays, * *An Author of ſo much Vivacity, and ſo full of himſelf, can hardly be expected to keep the dull Road of Reaſoning. His Wit will ſometimes run away with him, hence proceed ſo much Pertneſs and Spirit in his Performance, and witty Conceits in ſerious Argument.*

C. It is plain, he was ſeriouſly confounded when he read it. I think his Zeal carries him out of the Road of fair Reaſoning. His Judgment of me has nothing todo with the Argument, tho' he builds his whole Argument upon it.

F. The *Clearer* quotes you ſaying, "In my Opinion, great "Judgment and great Faith are "ſuch Contradictions, that they "never unite in one Perſon." And comments on it thus: *I dare ſay, he did not make this Declaration on any Suſpicion he had of his own Judgment.*

C. I dare ſay he does not make any Declaration againſt me, upon any Suſpicion he has of his own want of ſuperior Judgment, but thinks he has quitted Scores with me at leaſt; or elſe is willing it ſhould be thought ſo.

F. Again, you ſaid with reſpect to Miracles, *every real Miracle is an Abſurdity to common Senſe, and contrary to the Attributes of God.*

C. Yes it is ſo, according to my underſtanding of Miracles, and the Divine Attributes, if Wiſdom and Goodneſs, and Unchangeableneſs are the Attributes of God.

F. After theſe expreſs Declarations one would wonder (he ſays) *how* you *could propoſe yourſelf to the World as a proper Perſon to make a fair Examination of the Evidence of the Reſurrection, which is both the greateſt Miracle, and the greateſt Article, of the Chriſtian Faith.*

C. What! becauſe a Man expreſſes his Sentiments fairly and honeſtly, is he not therefore fit to enquire into an Argument?

F. He ſays, he *muſt needs commend you for the open and frank Declaration of your Principles in reſpect to Religion. Some have pretended Friendſhip to the Goſpel, that they might the more ſucceſsfully undermine the Foundation of it; but you act with more Bravery, and more Honeſty.*

C. I do not value myſelf upon his Commendation, for I cannot think he intended me any; if he did, he contradicts himſelf, which he has too much Senſe to do, at leaſt to intend; for if he commends me for my Honeſty, why does he object againſt my being

* Page 2.

a proper Perſon to make a fair Examination?

F. He objects againſt your Underſtanding, and thinks you prejudiced.

C. It is becauſe my Underſtanding is not under his Direction, and prejudiced as his is. But the leſs I have, the leſs is his Conqueſt. Perhaps he will not allow any one to be a proper Perſon to make a fair Examination of the Reſurrection, but he that believes it. And I would fain know, how ſuch an one can be a proper Perſon. The ſtronger Faith, the greater Partiality: How a partial Man can be one proper to make a fair Examination, I cannot conceive, and believe he cannot prove; therefore, ſince he himſelf profeſſes to have a ſtrong Faith in the Reſurrection, and in Miracles, he cannot be a proper Perſon. Now ſuppoſing a Doubter the only Man fit to enquire, and that neither he nor I are ſuch; if he will allow himſelf a fit Advocate on one ſide, he may grant me fit to object on the other; and by virtue of our Arguments, let the enquiring Reader make an Examination, and judge of the Matter; for this is my View and Intention.

F. No, but the View you had in anſwering the *Trial of the Witneſſes*, he expreſſes in your own Words in *that Anſwer*; * "My deſign is to promote that "Veneration for Wiſdom and "Virtue, which has been debaſ-"ed and degraded by Faith, by "a Faith which has not ſent "Peace on Earth, but a Sword. "—— Where this fooliſh Faith "bears Sway, the Tree of Know-"ledge produces damning Fruit: "But under the benign Influence "of GEORGE our King, in this "glorious Day of Light and "Liberty, this Divine Hag, and "her pious Witchcrafts, which "were brought forth by Dark-"neſs, and nouriſhed by Obſcu-"rity, faint at the Approach of "Day, and vaniſh upon Sight."

C. Very well, theſe were my Words, and what then?

F. Why then, he ſays, *The Faith which the Goſpel propoſes in* Jeſus Chriſt, *the ever-bleſſed Son of God, and the only Name under Heaven by which we may be ſaved, is here, with an aſtoniſhing Degree of Impiety, called* a divine Hag with pious Witchcrafts.

C. All this is Conjuration and Witchcraft, with the Maſk of Piety, to ſtir up Mens Prejudices, and inflame their Paſſions. But go on.

F. Unhappy Man (ſays he) *what could he mean by this? I pity him from my Heart.*

C. Artifice all! Proceed.

F. † *But what* (ſays he) *could he mean by abuſing the King, unleſs he had a Mind to ſhew, that he is juſt as good a Subject as he is a Chriſtian?*

C. Unhappy Gentleman, what does he mean to miſtake for the Faith of *Chriſt*, the Faith I had deſcribed, "which debaſes and "degrades both Wiſdom and "Virtue, which has not ſent "Peace on Earth, but a Sword;" or that to call ſuch Faith, *a Divine Hag with pious Witchcrafts*, is any Degree of Impiety? Or that I am to be pitied on this Account? Or that I have abuſed *the King*, by ſaying, that *under his benign Influence*,

* Page, 3.

† Page 4.

Influence, in this glorious Day of Light and Liberty, this malignant Faith faints and vaniſhes away? Which is a Glory that will immortalize his Reign. For ſtill we perceive the Goſpel flouriſhes among us in the beſt and moſt glorious Light it ever did; and conſequently the pureſt Faith of it remains, and triumphs with auſpicious Sway under his preſent Majeſty's Government and Protection. Therefore I really pity this Gentleman, thus to miſunderſtand and miſrepreſent the Faith which the Goſpel propoſes in *Jeſus Chriſt*, for the Faith which has long reigned in the Chriſtian World, which has diſcovered itſelf an Enemy to Peace, and Love, and Knowledge: For a Faith which is declarative of Deſtruction by Fire, and Sword, and Variance, and eternal War, the gnawing Worm of never-dying Enmity among Mankind, and the Fire of Contention between the neareſt and deareſt Relations that never can be quenched. What does this Author mean, thus to abuſe the Heavenly Majeſty of his Spiritual King *Chriſt Jeſus*, to aſcribe ſo pernicious a Faith to him? And by ſo forced an Inſinuation, as he makes uſe of, to excite the Civil Power to give the Reins to ſo barbarous, ſo bloody, and ſo diabolical a Faith, that the King may be his Slave, and Prieſts may rule over him; but plainly to prove, that he is equally angry, as he is miſtaken.

F. Every ſerious Man (he ſays) *will read theſe Paſſages with Abhorrence; and they are a Warning to every Reader to be upon his Guard againſt the Repreſentations made — by ſo determined, and ſo inveterate an Enemy.*

C. On ſo pernicious a Faith, every unprejudiced Perſon muſt look with Abhorrence, and be upon his Guard againſt the Profeſſors of it, whether they are induced to it by their own Blindneſs, or by Bribery; all ſuch are to be pitied, as wanting Senſe or Shame. I hope you ſee clearly, that this Expreſſion is more applicable to the *Clearer* than he is aware of, and turns to my Advantage: For I would have all Men upon their Guard, by what Compaſs they direct their Judgment and Conduct; 'tis an Affair of Moment, and will not, by thoſe that are wiſe, be taken upon Truſt. *Let Men be always upon their Guard, what they are taught to believe and do.* Let Arguments be weighed, and the Reaſon of Things impartially conſidered: And let not Men be deluded by holy Names, and a Face of Godlineſs: Since generally thoſe that Holy Mother-Church calls *Saints*, (who have exiſted nor merely in Romance) have been the *vileſt* of Men; therefore, as in common, *Saint* and *Villian* have been the ſame, they ought to be looked on in general as ſynonimous Terms. They that have affected to appear more ſanctified than thoſe, who have been morally honeſt, have only been ſo much more inwardly, ſecretly, and artfully wicked. Therefore, my *Friend*, if you would not be bubbled out of your Underſtanding, Reputation, Subſtance, Friends and Life, by malicious Arts, Slander and Villany in every grave and holy Shape,

when you ſee a Saint look to your Self. And take ſpecial Care, that the artful Inſinuations of intereſted, prejudiced, and cunning Men to raiſe popular Clamours, be not miſtaken for plain and uſeful Truths, nor bear them down. Permit a little Digreſſion on this Subject: 'Tis a tender Point, and the *Clearer* is pricked with it: There are ſurpriſing Expreſſions aſcribed to *Jeſus Chriſt* in our Goſpels, that he ſhould declare, *Luke* xii. 49 to 53. *I am come to ſend Fire on the Earth, and what will I if it be already kindled?* What does this mean?

F. Perhaps this may mean the Fire of the Holy Ghoſt, for *John* the Baptiſt ſaid of *Jeſus, He ſhall baptize you with the Holy Ghoſt, and with Fire.*

C. When there is no infallible Rule to find the Meaning of Scripture, all Interpretations are Gueſswork. 'Tis very hard to mend ſuch Expreſſions, and 'tis very hard to believe, that God ſhould deliver himſelf in ſuch a manner as wants mending.

F. It is an Act of common Charity, to give the beſt Conſtruction to Mens Words.

C. But 'tis alſo an Act of common Prudence, to endeavour to penerate to the right Senſe of them, to avoid impoſing on ourſelves, and being deceived. However, this Sentence might eaſily paſs with a ſpiritual Meaning, as you ſay, if what follows did not ſeem to prevent it; for leſt we ſhould be deceived by doing it, *Jeſus* is ſaid to tell us plainly: *Suppoſe ye that I am come to give Peace on Earth? I tell you, nay; but rather Diviſion: For from henceforth there ſhall be Five in one Houſe divided, Three againſt Two, and Two againſt Three. The Father ſhall be divided againſt the Son, and the Son againſt the Father: The Mother againſt the Daughter, and the Daughter againſt the Mother: The Mother-in-law againſt her Daughter-in-law, and the Daughter-in-law againſt her Mother-in law.* Agreeable to *Matt.* x. 34, 35, 36. *Think not that I am come to ſend Peace on the Earth: I came not to ſend Peace, but a Sword. For I am come to ſet a Man at Variance againſt his Father, and the Daughter againſt her Mother, and the Daughter-in-law againſt her Mother-in-law. And a Man's Foes ſhall be thoſe of his own Houſhold.*

F. Does the Goſpel then require People to be unnatural? Was it deſigned to looſen all natural Ties, and bind us with unnatural Chains?

C. I am perſuaded the Writers knew the Meaning, and their Aim. That the ſofteſt, ſtrongeſt Ties of Nature might not hinder the Propagation of the Goſpel, 'tis added, *He that loveth Father or Mother more than me, is not worthy of me: And he that loveth Son or Daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his Croſs and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.* And, as if all that was too little, *Luke* (xiv. 26.) tells us, that *Jeſus* ſaid to the Multitude, *If any Man come to me and* hate *not his Father and his Mother, and Wife, and Children, and Brethren, and Siſters, yea, and his own Life alſo, he cannot be my Diſciple.* This muſt have a great Effect upon the Fears of credulous Men: If ſuch a Declaration from the Author of any other Religion could be found by Chriſtians, and it was not their own Property

ty only, they would account it a Declaration ſufficient to condemn the whole. Thoſe that endeavour artfully to explain it away, ſhew how much they are aſhamed of it; but ſuch Paſſages ſtill are, by which deſigning Men have an Opportunity always to underſtand them as they pleaſe, or as they ſuit their Purpoſes: Theſe unexplained, one would think cannot be the Word of God; and expounded, are the Words of the Expounder only.

F. Perhaps *Jeſus* only meant prophetically, that not Peace, but Fire and Sword among Men, would be the Conſequence of his Miſſion.

C. Then he was a true Prophet, if he meant this would be the Spirit of Chriſtians: But if *he came* to ſend this terrible Meſſenger of his Vengeance, one would think he had better never have come, than come on ſuch an Errand. Let us pray the Father to ſave us from the Wrath of the Son! A Man had need to work Miracles that teaches ſuch a Doctrine is of God; and all are too little to make the reaſonable and moral Part of Mankind believe. The Romaniſts do well to *hide theſe Things from the Wiſe and Prudent*; for they, inſtead of believing them to be *the Bread that came down from Heaven whereof a Man may eat and not die*, may miſtake them for ſtrong Poiſon from an oppoſite Climate and diſtant World, or indigeſtible Cinders from the burning Furnace.

F. But when the Apoſtles were ſent abroad to preach, they were to bleſs the Places where they went, with Peace.

C. That was but a verbal Salutation: However, ſuppoſing they carried Peace wherever they went, if thoſe to whom they went did not receive them, *their Peace was to return to them again*, they were to take their Peace away with them, and therefore leave none behind. The Peace that *Jeſus* left, was only to his Diſciples, as the Goſpel acquaints us, but the bittereſt Execrations are poured out on all that do not believe.

F. But *Jeſus Chriſt* declared, that *the Son of Man was not come to deſtroy Men's Lives, but to ſave them.*

C. No, not to deſtroy them by Fire from Heaven, in the manner the Apoſtles, thoſe Miniſters of Mercy wanted him to call for. If the Saints were armed with *Jove's* Thunder, what terrible Work would they make! When *Jeſus* gave the *Jews* a Parable relating to himſelf, in the Application, among other Judgments of Rewards and Puniſhments to be given, when he had received the Kingdom, he ſays, *Luke* xix. 27. *Thoſe my Enemies which would not that I ſhould reign over them, bring them hither and ſlay them before me.* And at another Time, he ſaid to his Diſciples, *Luke* xxii. 36. *He that has no Sword, let him ſell his Garment and buy one:* Theſe are Things of the ſame Nature. The Apoſtles and the Holy Ghoſt ſeemed to underſtand this Meaning, if they killed *Ananias* and *Sapphira* his Wife with the Fire and Sword of the Spirit. If the Story of it be true, they ſoon learned their Leſſon, and ſoon begun to practiſe it.

F. You ſeem to queſtion the Truth of it?

C. 'Tis

C. 'Tis out of Reſpect to the Apoſtles that I do. You know I am an Uubeliever, and theſe Things make me ſo. I cannot tell how to account for them, but having a charitable Faith in the Lord *Jeſus*, chuſe rather to believe, that ſome evil Spirit has been meddling and ſowing Tares among the Wheat; that ſome who profeſſed themſelves his Diſciples have belied their Maſter; to the End, that becauſe he did not reign, they might reign in his Stead.

F. You ſaid, if the Saints were armed with *Jove's* Thunder, what terrible Work would they make; but they are ſo armed, if we believe what we read; *ſc.* their Power of working Miracles, and remitting and retaining Men's Sins; and ſome Doubts ariſe in my Mind concerning the Legality of the Apoſtle's putting *Ananias* and *Sapphira* to Death, ſuppoſing their Tale is true.

C. But I have a Multitude of Doubts and Objections beſides, *viz.* the Reaſonableneſs of ſuch Faith, or Dependance on Providence, as prevents Care and Labour for the Neceſſaries of Life. And the giving away *all* Men have, for the Sake of Religion, which is recommended in the Goſpel. The Juſtice of preferring a ſingle Life before a married State, and of making that an intolerable Yoke, when it happens wrong, by allowing no Divorce to ſet it right, whereby *Chriſt* is no Redeemer to married People. The Prohibition of revenging the Breach of Peace and Faith, receiving Injuries in Body, and the Loſs of Goods without proſecuting the Offenders, and inflicting legal Puniſhments upon them; and of fighting in Defence of our Lives and Properties, which encourages Impoſition and Villainy. The Neceſſity of Faith above Righteouſneſs, and of believing abſurd Principles, inexplicable Myſteries, and Facts improbable, if not abſolutely impoſſible, are ſuch Whirlpools to human Minds, that they abſorb all common Senſe, and utterly deſtroy the Uſe of Mens reaſoning Faculties in Matters of Religion. Thoſe Preachers of the Goſpel, who are Men of Senſe and Learning, are perpetually holding out to us the faireſt of its Morals, but draw a dark Veil over theſe Things, as we moſt now do.

F. Indeed they will lead us too far from the End deſigned at this Time, and therefore we muſt refer the Diſcuſſion of theſe Points till another Opportunity. The *Clearer* inſinuates, that you *was ſo little qualified to write an Anſwer to* the Trial of the Witneſſes, *that you did not underſtand it when you publiſhed your Anſwer, but miſtook ſometimes the Objection for the Anſwer to the Objection, and ſometimes* vice verſa, *and aſcribed to the Author of the Trial, the very Opinion he was confuting.*

C. This is a heavy Charge: Let us ſee how it is made out: Perhaps I may have committed ſome Errors as well as the *Clearer* and other Writers. I make no Pretenſions to Infallibility. Thoſe I have been guilty of, I believe will be found in the Skirts of the Argument, and Mode of Expreſſion, not in the Argument or Subject itſelf; which all unexperienced Diſputants, and unwary Writers are liable to, but ſuch are of little

little or no Conſequence to the Point in Debate.

F. His two firſt Inſtances are, what are mentioned in the firſt Edition, and left out in the other.

C. And therefore he, reſolving to take all Advantages, was determined not to leave them out in his Remarks.

F. In your firſt Edition he ſays, p. 5. You *have charged the Author of the Trial with founding Faith on Education, and writing in Favour of that Opinion.*

C. Theſe are my Words: "The Author of the *Trial* ſays *in Favour* of this Faith, which is the Effect of Education." Now certainly the ſaying ſomething in Favour of it, is one Thing; but founding Faith upon it, and writing in Favour of that Opinion, is another. Therefore this Accuſation being not rightly ſtated, falls of Courſe. One Quotation I afterwards made from the *Trial* in the ſame Edition, p. 11. ſhews how far I was from charging that Author with what this accuſes me of. "The Gentleman is pleaſed to "ſay, the mere Antiquity of the "Reſurrection I give up; for if "it was not good at firſt, it can-"not be good now." This is very fair.

F. The *Clearer* ſays, *To ſupport this Charge you quote from the Trial the very Words that diſclaim that Opinion*; and to make this good, he mentions one of your Quotations, and leaves the other out. But what if I join your two Quotations in one, as it ſtands in the *Trial.*

C. Be pleaſed to do ſo, and read it there.

F. Trial, p. 20. *The Gentleman's Obſervation*, (i. e. the Objector's) *That the general Belief of the Reſurrection creates a Preſumption that it ſtands upon good Evidence, and therefore People look no further, but follow their Fathers, as their Fathers did their Grandfathers before them, is in a great Meaſure true, but it is a Truth nothing to his Purpoſe. He allows that the Reſurrection has been believed in all Ages of the Church, that is, from the very Time of the Reſurrection: What then prevailed with thoſe who firſt received it? They certainly did not follow the Example of their Fathers. Here then is the Point: How did this Fact gain Credit in the World at firſt? Credit it has gained without doubt. If the Multitude at preſent go into this Belief through Prejudice, Example, and for Company's Sake, they do in this Caſe no more nor otherwiſe than they do in all other Caſes. And it cannot be denied but Truth may be received through Prejudice,* (*as it is called*) i. e. *without examining the Proof or Merits of the Cauſe, as well as Falſhood.*

C. This I imagined to be ſaid in Favour of that Faith which is the Effect of Education.

F. And 'tis what may reaſonably be ſaid.

C. For any educational Faith I grant, and proves, that a Faith which is the Effect of Education, is not always wrong. Therefore thoſe Quotations I made from this Paſſage, were only to introduce the Fitneſs of Enquiry, which, in my next Edition, is better expreſſed without them.

F. But the *Clearer* ſays, you charge the *Author* of *the Trial* with *founding Faith on Education, and writing in Favour* of that Opinion, and puts thoſe Words in Italics, to make his Reader believe they

they were yours, to ſupport his Charge; as *to ſupport* yours, he ſays, *you quote from the Trial the very Words that diſclaim that Opinion.*

C. Then this Charge had no Support, and his has as little. But as it was not my Intention then, neither am I diſpoſed to ſupport it now.

F. The *Clearer* ſays, *'tis marvellous how you could read, could tranſcribe thoſe Words into your Book, and not feel that the Meaning and Intent of them was to lay the Force of Cuſtom and Education quite out of the Caſe, and to bring the Queſtion to reſt upon the original Evidence of the Reſurrection at the firſt, before Cuſtom or Education could poſſibly have any Influence.*

C. This is alſo my Intention, therefore let him not be angry with me, for I join Iſſue with him in this Point. But if I had been as wrong as the *Clearer* charges me to be, or as wrong as he is in charging me, I had dropt this Paſſage, by his own Confeſſion, in my new Edition, leaving it as a Pattern to others, when they feel what is right, to drop what is wrong. As 'tis ſcarce poſſible for any to be faultleſs, none ſhould preſume nor exult. In ſmall Things 'tis eaſy to err, or to ſhew the Error of another.

F. But here is the Point: *How did this Fact gain Credit in the World at firſt? Credit it has gained without Doubt.*

C. I have had Occaſion to examine *Origen* againſt *Celſus*, and if we may be permitted to draw an Anſwer from thence, it appears, that the want of ſtrict Examination into the Report, gave it Credit in the credulous World at firſt. *Celſus* ſays, "that ſome of the "Chriſtians, neither examining "what it was they believed, nor "caring to be examined, uſed "this Expreſſion: *Do not examine "into Matters but believe, and thy "Faith will infallibly ſave thee.*"

F. What ſays *Origen* to this?

C. He ſays, That our bleſſed Saviour would have Perſons of mean Capacities, and under ſome peculiar Circumſtances, to believe without a ſevere Examination; ſince otherwiſe we cannot ſuppoſe that the Goſpel would be of any real Advantage to them. — The Method of ſtrict Examination being for Reaſons (ſays he) before given impracticable, what better Way could one have contrived and taken, more ſuited to the Genius and outward Circumſtances of the common People, than that which our bleſſed Saviour took for the Converſion of a degenerate World.

F. What were thoſe Reaſons?

C. They are comprehended in theſe Words, which ſeem to grant the Reaſonableneſs of Enquiry, though at the ſame Time they diſcourage it; *viz. The ſublime Doctrines of the Chriſtian Religion are not more involved, and attended with greater Obſcurity than many Opinions of Philoſophers. If all Men could conveniently leave the Concerns of Life, and had Leiſure, Inclination, and Ability to examine, 'twould be better for them to build their Faith on rational and convincing Arguments, than take Things on Truſt.* You may perceive his Reaſons are, the Obſcurity of the Doctrines, which required Men's leaving the Concerns of Life for Leiſure to examine; and their having Inclinations and Abilities, which were ſuch Difficulties, that the

the greateſt Part of Mankind had neither Abilities nor Inclinations to ſurmount them.

F. Does *Origen* then juſtify Men's Belief of Things they don't enquire into?

C. Theſe are his Words: Since our Adverſaries are continually making ſuch a Stir about *our taking Things on Truſt*, I anſwer, that we who ſee plainly, and have found the vaſt Advantage that the common Sort of People do manifeſtly and frequently reap thereby, who make up by far the greater Number; I ſay, we who are well adviſed of theſe Things, *do profeſſedly teach them* to believe, without a ſevere Examination, who cannot neglect their worldly Buſineſs, and ſpare Time enough to make long and exact Enquiries into the Grounds of our holy Religion.

F. Origen excuſes an exact and ſtrict Enquiry.

C. Unleſs the Enquiry be ſtrict and exact, it may as well not be at all; for in that Part which is ſlubbered over, may lay the Deceit. We ſee from this Confeſſion of *Origen*'s Doctrine of Chriſtianity, *viz.* the Neceſſity of Faith, without a ſtrict Examination into the Foundation of it, or from their avowed Practice to take Principles upon Truſt, the Reſurrection of *Jeſus* might gain Credit in the World at firſt, and that *the common People, who make up by far the greater Nnmber*, did then, as they do now, take it upon Truſt; and no doubt but their Teachers taught it then as they teach it now for Intereſt, were it not for this, the Teachers themſelves would deny it.

F. His next Impeachment is, * that you ſay, 'Tis argued the Apoſtles were ſincere, therefore what they reported was true." *That you do not directly charge the Author of the* Trial *with arguing thus.*

C. And therefore he might have paſſed it over as what did not concern him; but to do ſo, would not anſwer his Deſign: He thought he could make ſome Advantage of it.

F. To perſuade the Reader, that *the only Thing you have made clear is, that you did not know what you were writing about.*

C. Why, the whole *Trial* is to ſhew that the Reſurrection was real Matter of Fact, evidenced by the Report of the Witneſſes; and that the Sincerity of the Reporters, is an Argument of the Proof of it. And I think this is the whole Argument: For what Proof have we that the Reporters of the Fact were not deceived, but their Report? And what Proof have we of the Truth of their Relation, but the Perſuaſion of the Sincerity of the Relators? And what other Proof can be given to any, or what Sort of Proof can be given to thoſe that believe them inſincere? Attend to what the Author of the *Trial* ſays, p. 65. *Preſumptions are of no Weight againſt* poſitive *Evidence; and every Account of the Reſurrection aſſures us, that the Body of Chriſt was ſeen, felt, and handled by many Perſons.* And Page 104. *Now if you will allow the Sufferings of the Apoſtles to prove their Sincerity, which you cannot well diſallow, and conſider that they died for the Truth of a Matter of Fact which they had ſeen themſelves, you will perceive how ſtrong the Evidence is in this Caſe. In Doctrines and Matters of Opinion, Men miſtake perpetually, and*

* Page 5.

and it is no Reaſon for me to take up with another Man's Opinion, becauſe I am perſuaded he is ſincere in it; but when a Man reports to me an uncommon Fact, yet ſuch a one as in its own Nature is a plain Object of Senſe, if I believe him not, 'tis not becauſe I ſuſpect his Eyes, or his Senſe of Feeling, but merely becauſe I ſuſpect his Sincerity; for if I was to ſee the ſame Thing myſelf I ſhould believe myſelf; and therefore my Suſpicion does not ariſe from the Inability of human Senſes to judge in the Caſe, but from a Doubt of the Sincerity of the Reporter; in ſuch Caſes therefore, there wants nothing to be proved, but only the Sincerity of the Reporter; and ſince voluntary Suffering for the Truth, is at leaſt a Proof of Sincerity, the Sufferings of the Apoſtles for the Truth of the Reſurrection, is a full and unexceptionable Proof.

F. So then you charge this on the Author of the *Trial* now, tho' you did not before. The *Clearer* ſays. *Whomſoever you mean to charge with arguing thus, it ſhews plainly you never underſtood the Uſe or Force of the Argument drawn from the Topic of Sincerity, which is never applied to prove the ſincere Reporter delivers nothing but Truth, for he may be, and often is, impoſed on himſelf; but is uſed merely to ſhow, that he is not a Deceiver himſelf, and acting with a Deſign to impoſe on others.*

C. I wiſh none of my Antagoniſts have any ſuch Deſign, whoſe Underſtandings there is no Room to queſtion. 'Tis certain, that *Origen* quotes from the Epiſtle of *Barnabas*, That *Jeſus choſe ſuch Perſons to the Apoſtolic Function as were wicked to the laſt Degree.* And theſe are thoſe whoſe Sincerity we are to depend upon. And yet we ſee the Hiſtorian's *poſitive Evidence* of no natural or probable, but ſupernatural, and therefore improbable Fact to Reaſon, tho' not to Faith, is proved by Sincerity, and their Sincerity by their Sufferings; and that this alone, *for nothing elſe can do it*, is to prove the Hiſtory true, that they were not deceived themſelves, nor had any Deſign to deceive others.

F. There is little Reaſon then for the *Clearer*'s Reflections that, *ſome kind Friend pointed out this Miſtake, and it diſappears upon the new Edition.*

C. This ſame kind Friend, which this Gentleman more than once upbraids me with, who adviſed theſe Alterations, is what I am ignorant of. But if my Amendments were by ſuch Monitions, it appears I am not incorrigible, but willing to know, and amend my Faults, and reform my Errors as ſoon as I diſcern them. I am not ſo vain as to think I ſtood in no Need of the Aſſiſtance of ſome able Friend. No doubt but more Time, and the Direction of better Judgment, would have added a Grace to my Performance. I do not Queſtion but the *Clearer*, and ſome others of my Adverſaries, are much better Diſputants than I, and *can make the worſe, appear the better Reaſon, to perplex and daſh maturer Counſel.* And that himſelf no doubt received Aid and Improvements from the Judgment and Advice of the learned Author to whom he inſcribes his Sheets: I had no ſuch Helps. To wiſe and learned Heads, and an Auxiliary of more than 200,000, upon Occaſion, that have nothing elſe to do, being kept

kept in Pay on Purpoſe to fight for the Church Militant, are certainly able to bear down one undiſciplined Volunteer in this literary War, if the Goodneſs of the Cauſe alone did not ſupport me.

F. But if this was not a Fault in the firſt Edition, was it not a Fault to leave it out in the next?

C. This Argument was not ſo fully expreſſed as it ought to have been, for I affected Brevity too much. But, concerning the Alterations made in the new Edition, once for all I give theſe Reaſons: I thought it proper to leave out ſome Things leſs neceſſary, that I might make room for others more material, which are not in the firſt; and to amend and ſhorten the Expreſſions, that it might excel the pirated ſecond Edition at the ſame Price. If this ſpurious Piece had not appeared, I had no Intention to expoſe it ſo publicly, or reprint it.

F. The *Clearer*, * accuſes you of charging the Words of *A* the Objector, to *B* the Author of the *Trial*, and which, he ſays, *will hardly paſs for a Miſtake only, having received the Approbation of your ſecond Thoughts, by a Place in your new Edition.* For, ſays he, the Perſon deſigned by *B* in the *Trial*, p. 30. or the Author of it, repeats the Objection of *A* the Pleader againſt the Reſurrection, which let us turn to. It runs thus: *There is but one Obſervation more which the Gentleman* (i. e. A) *made under this Head, Jeſus* (he ſays) *referred to the Authority of ancient Prophecies, to prove that the Meſſias was to die and riſe again; the ancient Books referred to are extant, and no ſuch Prophecies* (he ſays) *are to be found. Now, whether the Gentleman can find theſe Prophecies or no, is not material to the preſent Queſtion. It is allowed, that Chriſt foretold his own Death and Reſurrection; if the Reſurrection was managed by Fraud, Chriſt was certainly in the Fraud himſelf, by foretelling the Fraud that was to happen; diſprove therefore the Reſurrection, and we ſhall have no further Occaſion for Prophecy. On the other Side by foretelling the Reſurrection, he certainly put the Proof of his Miſſion on the Truth of the Event. Whether it be the Character of the Meſſias in the ancient Prophets or no, that he ſhould die and riſe again, without doubt Jeſus is not the Meſſias if he did not riſe again; for by his own Prophecy, he made it a Part of the Character of the Meſſias.*

C. Well, what is the Accuſation?

F. The Accuſation is in theſe Words: *Is it not manifeſt to Sight, that thoſe Words,* † "The ancient "Books referred to are extant, "and no ſuch Prophecies are to "be found," *Expreſs the Senſe and Opinion of the Objector to the Reſurrection? But* that you *charge it to the Author of the* Trial, *as his own Sentiment, which you would not have done, had you quoted the Paſſage fairly. For this Reaſon you have altered it, and left out all the Words which expreſly refer the Opinion to the Objector.*

C. In this very Inſtance, he is guilty of the very Fault he accuſes me: For to make me culpable he has perverted my Quotation, and himſelf has repreſented me charging to the Author of the *Trial*, as his own Sentiment, the Exceptions of *A*, the Objector. For this Reaſon, he has altered, and left out all the Words which are expreſly thoſe of *B*, the Author

* Page 6. † Page 7.

thor of the *Trial*, and applied them to *A*'s Exceptions. Therefore I have placed them in two oppoſite Columns, that the Reader may the more eaſily perceive my Meaning:

In my firſt Edition, p. 20. my Quotation is thus:

The Author of the *Trial* ſays, that *Chriſt foretold his own Death and Reſurrection*; therefore, *if the Reſurrection was managed by Fraud, he was certainly in the Fraud himſelf, by foretelling the Fraud that was to happen.* And though the Gentleman grants, that *Jeſus referred to the Authorities of the ancient Prophecies, to prove that the Meſſias was to die and riſe again; and that though the antient Books referred to are extant, and no ſuch Prophecies are to be found; whether theſe Prophecies can be found or no, 'tis not material to the preſent Queſtion:* Becauſe, ſays the Gentleman, *diſprove the Reſurrection, and we ſhall have no further Occaſion for Prophecy.*

The *Clearer* ſays my Quotation ſtand thus:

"The Author of the *Trial* (or "Mr. *B*) ſays, that though Jeſus "referred to the Authority of the "ancient Prophecies, to prove "that the Meſſias was to die and "riſe again; that though the "ancient Books referred to are "extant, and no ſuch Prophe-"cies are to be found; whe-"ther the Prophecies can be "found or no, 'tis not material "to the preſent Queſtion."

F. This Quotation of yours begins differently in your new Edition.

C. Yet it begins with the Words of the Author of the *Trial*, thus: Mr. *B.* ſays, (p. 11.) That *Chriſt Jeſus declared himſelf a Prophet, and put the Proof of his Miſſion on this, that he ſhould die openly and publicly, and riſe again the third Day, and* (p. 30.) *that though Jeſus referred*, &c.

F. Here the Words, *though the Gentleman grants*, are omitted.

C. I know not by what Means this Error happened; yet, I think, it is implied that the Words which follow, are an Objection that ſtand in the Way. But why then was not *this Omiſſion* complained of, which is the only Fault that ought to have been, and not a falſe one urged and inſinuated. I fear I ſhall find more ſuch unfair Quotations and Complaints, and ſince this is evidently one, hit own Application be to himſelf, *viz. This will hardly paſs for a Miſtake only; I ſhall leave his fair Dealing to be tried upon a Compariſon of the Paſſage, as it ſtands in the* Trial, *and as it is tranſcribed into my Anſwer*, and the *Clearer*'s Repreſentation of it: *And let him account to his Readers, if he can, for having ſo groſſly impoſed on them.* It is plain, I had no Intention to miſrepreſent the Author's Meaning, as he inſinuates, for the Page is referred to, and the Book itſelf is recommended to the Conſideration of the Reader. It is vexa-

tious

tious to ſpend ſo much Time and Labour in making large Quotations on ſuch *immaterial* Points; but I having to do with an *artful* Adverſary, am obliged to it, to ſet Matters in a clear Light.

F. The *Clearer* ſays, that the only Thing here proper to be charged on the Author of the *Trial*, is expreſſed in theſe Words, *Whether the Gentleman* (i. e. the Objector) *can find theſe Prophecies or no, is not material to the preſent Queſtion.*

C. Yes, the Words going before the Exceptions, which I have mentioned, and he has omitted, as well as thoſe that follow, are properly that Author's. Though if thoſe he has quoted do expreſs the Senſe of the Objector, the Author does not reſolve it; therefore it remains good: Why then is it not material?

F. * *I think* (continues he) *this is ſaid very juſtly; for ſurely Believers are not to wait for the Evidence of Prophecy, 'till Infidels can, or will ſee it.*

C. Believers do not wait, whether they have Evidence, or no; but why are they to be ſo haſty, as not to let Infidels ſee the Evidence of Prophecy, if any is to be ſeen?

F. Becauſe the Argument from Prophecies, in this Caſe, is given up.

C. Why was it given up, but becauſe the Prophecies and the Facts they are ſaid to relate to cannot be found, or do not correſpond?

F. The *Clearer* objects, that *the preſent Queſtion related to the Truth of the Reſurrection conſidered merely as Matter of Fact; and as Facts muſt be proved, not by Prophecy, but by hiſtorical Evidence, it was impertinent to talk of Prophecy, when the Enquiry concerned a mere Fact only.*

C. I thought it material to the preſent Queſtion, as it concerned the Credit of the Witneſſes; for with what Reaſon ſhould that Evidence determine a Fact ſuſpected, when the Caſe affords juſt Reaſon to ſuſpect the Evidence? For the Witneſſes pretend Prophecies to precede Facts, which want Probability; and Facts to anſwer Prophecies, which themſelves ſeem never to have found. Therefore it was very material to the preſent Queſtion of the Fact of the Reſurrection, to prove their Correſpondence, in order to corroborate the Credibility of the Evidence. Ought not this Matter of Fact to be proved by credible Evidence? If they are not to be believed in one Part of the Story, for what Reaſon ſhould they be credited in the other? Why ſhould not the Subject be conſidered with all its Accidents, and thoſe eſpecially on which it is founded; and have, ever ſince its riſe, been the grand Subject of Debate between Jews and Chriſtians. For Chriſtianity was at firſt only looked on by the Jews and Heathens, as heretical Judaiſm.

F. But 'tis complained that you, *for want of Diſcernment, or ſomething elſe*, ſay, *It is granted, the Goſpel-Hiſtorian ſuggeſt, there are Prophecies which are not to be found in the Books they refer to, but this is not material:* You leave out the Words, *to the preſent Queſtion*, and go on.

* Page 8.

C. And what then?

F. Why then, you *only appear to be hunting down a great Blunder of your own?*

C. Were thoſe Words, *to the Queſtion*, ſo very material then? Pray what was the preſent Queſtion?

F. The Truth of the Reſurrection conſidered merely as a matter of Fact.

C. Is not that plainly underſtood? Could I mean any Thing elſe? This Complaint ſeems to be made *for want of Diſcernment, or ſomething elſe.* I find, when Men reſolve to complain, if they cannot make *juſt* Complaints, it will not hinder them from complaining. The Art of this Gentleman, I perceive, conſiſts in ſetting me in a bad Light; that by this, what Credit I am robbed of his Arguments may gain. I am very ſorry we muſt be delivered, by ſuch Stuff, from what is *material to the preſent Queſtion.*

F. The *Clearer* alledges, * That you have produced Words out of the *Trial*, and *expreſſed them as the Senſe of the Author himſelf, by which artful Abuſe of Language, to make the* Reader *imagine that you have convicted the* Author *out of his own Mouth.* Two Inſtances are given for Proofs:

C. This is an Accuſation of a Crime ſo far diſtant from my Deſign, that I thought could never have come into any Man's Head. Repeat the firſt.

F. In the 14th Page of the *Trial*, the *Objector* ſays, *In other Caſes, the Evidence ſupports the Credit of the Hiſtory, but here the Evidence it ſelf is preſumed on upon the Credit which the Hiſtory has gained.* In p. 8. of your firſt Edition, you introduce it thus; *'Tis true, that* in *other Caſes the Evidence ſupports the Credit of the Hiſtory, but here the Evidence itſelf is preſumed only upon the Credit which the Hiſtory has gained.* In p. 6. of your third Edition, it is thus introduced: *If upon Enquiry it be found, that tho' in other Caſes the Evidence ſupports the Credit of the Hiſtory, yet here,* &c.

C. I believe no *Reader* underſtood thoſe Expreſſions, but in the Light I intended them; not produced as the Senſe of the *Author*, but made Uſe of as the fitteſt, by which to expreſs the Senſe of my Argument on the Subject, without regarding whether they were the Words of the *Objector*, or the *Author*, or having any Deſign of fathering ſuch a Senſe on the *Author* of the *Trial.* I think the manner of introducing the Sentence complained of, is ſufficient to clear me from this Accuſation.

F. The *Clearer* ſays, You *was made ſenſible of this Miſtake, and tho' the Paſſage ſtill ſtands, and very improperly, in your new Edition, yet you have taken ſome Care to cover the Blunder, by dropping the Reference to the* Trial.

C. But the Misfortune is, I do not know who made me ſenſible of the Blunder, nor that it is ſuch, whether the Reference to the *Trial* be made or not. The very quoting the *Trial*, I thought, would clear me of the Imputation of expreſſing the Words quoted as the Senſe of the *Author* himſelf. What is the other Inſtance?

F. The Author *of the* Trial, *to ſhew that the* Jews, *in guarding the Sepulchre,*

* Page 9 and 10.

Sepulchre, betrayed a ſecret Conviction of the Truth of the Miracles performed by Chriſt in his Life time, ſays, *Trial*, p. 38. " For had they " been perſuaded that he wrought " no Wonders in his Life, I think " they would not have been a- " fraid of ſeeing any done by " him after his Death." *The* Author *of the* Trial, *to ſhew the Inconſiſtency of* Woolſton's *Scheme*, ſays, p. 39. Surely this is a moſt " ſingular Caſe; when the Peo- " ple thought him a Prophet, " the chief Prieſts ſought to kill " him, and thought his Death " would put an End to his Pre- " tenſions; when they and the " People diſcovered him to be a " Cheat, then they thought him " not ſafe, even when he was " dead, but were afraid he ſhould " prove a true Prophet, and ac- " cording to his own Prediction " riſe again." You quote the Words thus in p. 38. of the firſt Edition, and p. 29. of the third: " There is no Reaſon then to " ſuppoſe they were afraid of a " true Reſurrection, or that they " were convinced of any Mira- " cles ſaid to be done by him. " But *they being perſuaded he per- " formed no Wonders in his Life, " were not afraid of ſeeing any " done by him after his Death.* " Therefore, that *they ſhould kill " him, that his Death might put " an End to all Pretenſions, yet think " him not ſafe when he was dead*, " is, I muſt own, a needleſs and " prepoſterous Fear, and a moſt " ſingular Caſe, as the Gentle- " man (meaning the *Author* of " the *Trial*) rightly expreſſes it," p. 38, and 39.

C. Who ſees not that the *Author* of the *Trial* wrote this to ſhew an Inconſiſtency in the Scheme he oppoſed, and that what I wrote is to ſhew the Conſiſtency of mine in his own Words; and therefore quoted the Place where they are to be found in the *Trial*, directing the *Reader* thereby to judge of both, and obſerve how they were applied? Is it any Injuſtice to the *Author* of the *Trial*, that I have expreſſed the Force of my Argument in Words or Expreſſions borrowed from him? Since, I think, no body but the *Clearer* would offer to charge me for ſo doing, as he does: That *by an artful Abuſe of the Language in the* Trial, *I would make the* Reader *imagine* any Thing elſe, than that I have illuſtrated my Argument againſt him in his own Words. Since I referred to the Place from whence I borrowed them, the *Reader* is to ſee and judge for himſelf. And the References were evidently done, to ſhew to what End we both applied them, tho' ſometimes to different; becauſe they ſeemed to me to ſuit my way of Reaſoning as well as his. But, perhaps his own Arguments turned upon him, *alter the Caſe:* Tho' I have been uſed to think, that the ſame Arguments were alike good, when the Caſes were alike.

F. The *Clearer* complains that, *amongſt other Things amazingly acted*, you reckon this for one: * " That St. *Matthew* ſhould be " admitted as an Evidence in a " Court to prove a Fact, when " he was abſent; *and for this you refer the Reader to the* Trial, p. 42. And that the Page referred to has nothing of St. *Matthew* in it,

* Page 10 and 11.

it, but of the *Watch*, concerning whoſe Report of the Diſciples ſtealing away the Body while the Guard ſlept; there the *Objector* is aſked, *Whether he has any Authorities in Point to ſhew, that ever any Man was admitted as an Evidence in any Court to prove a Fact, which happened when he was aſleep?*

C. And I, in return, made the other a Matter of like Wonder, concerning St. *Matthew*'s telling what a Privy Council of the *Jews* did, about bribing the *Watch*, thinking it pretty near a parallel Caſe.

F. He ſuppoſes you guilty of a *great Blunder, not to know the Difference between an Hiſtorian, and one produced as an Eye-witneſs.*

C. But who ever produced the *Watch*, as Eye-witneſſes, when they were aſleep? They could not pretend to be ſuch, they owned the contrary by ſaying, what they reported was done when they were aſleep. And as ſome body muſt be ſuppoſed to acquaint *Matthew* with what the Privy Council ſaid, and acted, ſo ſome body, with no leſs Probability and Proof, may be ſuppoſed to acquaint the *Watch* when they were awake, who ſtole away the Body, which before they ſlept they ſaw ſecured, but afterwards gone, and the Sepulchre broke open. Or if the *Watch* only ſuppoſed by whom the Thing was done, and could attribute it to no other more probable Cauſe, I think, in this Caſe, they were as much Hiſtorians as St. *Matthew* was, and relate Things on equal Credit. Therefore, in this Caſe, the *Watchmen* and St. *Matthew* are to be conſidered equally as Eye-witneſſes, and Hiſtorians. Nay, if there was a Watch ſet, 'tis not improbable they were uſed by *Pilate*, rather as Spies to obſerve, than as Watch to prevent any Thing, and ſo might pretend Sleep, whilſt they let the Diſciples ſteal away the Body, or might be their Confederates.

F. The *Clearer* draws this Inference from his Remark on this Paſſage: *It ſhews how well qualified you are to determine on the Credit of the Goſpel Hiſtorians, when you do not apprehend the plaineſt Thing relating to Evidence, what is neceſſary to give Credit to an Eye-witneſs, and what to an Hiſtorian. After theſe Inſtances, there is little Reaſon to expect from your Hand a judicious, or a fair Anſwer to the* Trial.

C. This Gentleman's angry Diſpoſition has induced him to make too haſty Concluſions. Or elſe it is by this Art, he attempts to eſtabliſh his Arguments, or bring them to a Criſis to invalidate all mine. His inſinuating a Diſtinction where there is no Difference, ſhews how well qualified he is to miſrepreſent his Antagoniſt, and deceive his Readers.

F. The *Clearer* ſays, * The Reſurrection conſidered, *is plainly a Piece of Patchwork, and has but little in it to entitle it to be called,* An Anſwer to the Trial.

C. It is ſo far from being a Piece of Patchwork, that it is nothing elſe but Patchwork picked in Pieces. The beſt that can be done with bad Stuff, which Traders attempt to put off, is to ſhew how bad it is.

F. The *Clearer* aſks, *Have you weighed the Arguments on both Sides of*

of the Queſtion, as ſtated in the Trial, *and ſhewed where the* Author *of the* Trial *either diſſembled the Force of the Objection, or failed in the Anſwer to it? Nothing like it,* ſays he.

C. Is he angry becauſe I have not charged the *Author* with any Thing mean or baſe? No, I do not ſo much as pretend to it. I thought it enough to examine his Foundation, whether Arguments brought from thence, are ſufficient Proofs of the Fact aſſerted, and believed.

F. The *Clearer* ſays, you *have found an eaſier Method of making an Appearance of an Anſwer to the Trial.*

C. I own, I found it no hard Matter to make a real Diſcovery of the Inſufficiency of the Evidence, by which the Cauſe was tried.

F. He continues, that *ſome Paſſages taken independently of the Argument of which they are a Part, you have ſingled out to furniſh Matter of Controverſy. But as theſe were too few in Number to make a decent Appearance of Quotations from a Book, which you profeſſed to anſwer,* ———

C. Many Quotations are to me, I own, a laborious Piece of Work, therefore I made as few as poſſible; but I endeavoured to take ſuch Paſſages as contained the main Force of the Subject.

F. Let me go on: *You have,* he ſays, *taken the Liberty to uſe the Language of the* Trial *to your own Purpoſe, and have diſtinguiſhed it in* Italics, *and referred the Reader to the* Trial, *even where the Words, by the Additions and Alterations made by* you, *are turned to a Senſe directly contrary to that in which the* Author *of the* Trial *uſed them. And by this little Art,* you *appear, to an unwary Reader, to be quoting and confuting* the Trial of the Witneſſes.

C. If I have uſed the Language of the *Trial* to my own Purpoſe, I know of no Injury I did, or deſigned the *Author* by ſo doing. And quoting the *Trial,* I thought was very fair, that the *Reader* might ſee to what different Purpoſes the Words were uſed, and that I had no Intention to impoſe upon him, or pervert the Senſe of the *Author.* Whether References had been made or not to the *Trial,* I do not ſee how the *Reader* could miſunderſtand the Matter.

F. But as much as you have perverted, altered, and miſapplied the Paſſages taken from the Trial, ſays the *Clearer,* * *it is nothing in Compariſon with your Abuſe of the Writers of the* New Teſtament, *whom you treat as Impoſtors and Cheats, and void even of Cunning to tell their own Story plauſibly.*

C. And if they do not tell their own Story plauſibly, am I to blame?

F. Yes, to tell of it, and charge them with it.

C. I take the common, natural, literal Senſe of Scripture to be the Meaning. I do not examine it with the Criticiſms of a Grammarian; for I am told, the Diſciples of *Jeſus* were ignorant and unlearned Men, they then could not write grammatically, its rather a Queſtion, whether they could write at all. *Peter* and *John* are confeſſed to be ſuch; *Acts* iv. 13. who then wrote *Peter's* Epiſ-

* Page 13.

tles, and *John's* Goſpel, Epiſtles and Revelation, is worth Enquiry, if it could be found out. And that illiterate *Hebrews* ſhould write in *Greek*, is ſolvable by nothing but Miracles, which is capable of making *every* Thing, *any* Thing, or *Nothing*. Nor had they any ſpiritualizing Notion, for they were always forced to aſk their Maſter the Meaning of his Parables; and if at any Time they were *afraid* to do that, for fear he ſhould upbraid them with their Dulneſs, they remained ignorant.

F. The *Clearer* ſays, you have charged St. *Matthew* with forging a Prophecy, (firſt Edition, p. 28. third, p. 20)

C. I obſerved, that the Sign given to that *evil Generation* was never fulfilled to them; therefore, I conjectured it was not given by *Jeſus Chriſt*, but was Forgery, which I did not therefore aſcribe to St. *Matthew*. Or otherwiſe, I ſuppoſed it might be miſrepreſented by Tranſcribers. Could any Thing be more modeſt? Let him prove the Genuineneſs of St. *Matthew*'s Goſpel if he can, and anſwer Mr. *John Potter*'s ingenious Treatiſe called, *The Authority of the Old and New Teſtament conſidered*; where he has proved, that the two firſt Chapters of St. *Matthew*'s Goſpel are a ſpurious Addition, and ſhewn other Interpolations in the *New Teſtament*.

F. And Matthew, Mark *and* Luke, *are charged with fraudulent Deſigns*; (firſt Edition, p. 31. third, p. 23.) and again, there is Reaſon, you ſay, *to ſuſpect all the Predictions of the Reſurrection in them, to be Forgery*

C. In Things that do not agree, there is not the Appearance of Truth; and when we find this, it is natural to ſuſpect ſome Reaſon: Therefore I ſuppoſed that there was Forgery in the *Text*, of which I conceive the Diſagreements are a Proof. I thought it better to do this, than to aſcribe Lies to *God*, or Fraud to his *only Son*, or his *Servants*, the *holy Apoſtles*. I would not be thought ſo prophane as to blaſpheme the Characters of the Saints, whoſe *Piety, Wiſdom and Sincerity*, is not to be queſtioned. Their Inconſiſtency, therefore, I imputed to others. The Tranſlator of *Origen* againſt *Celſus* ſays, the Scripture is corrupted in the Original; theſe are his words, (Preface, p. 9.) *Nay, the* Greek *and* Hebrew *Text of the Scripture, thoſe ſacred and refreſhing Fountains of living Water, have been ſhamefully polluted by human Additions, and curſed Innovations.*

How then have I abuſed the Writers of the *New Teſtament*, as the *Clearer* would inſinuate, that *Matthew* is charged with forging a Story of the Watch, and that there is Reaſon to ſuſpect all the Predictions of the Prophecy of the Reſurrection to be Forgery, ſince their Diſagreements in the fulfilling thoſe Prophecies can ſignify no leſs.

F. The *Clearer*, p. 19. ſays, that *Celſus* lived at no great Diſtance from the Apoſtolic Age: Did he know any Thing of the Corruption of the Goſpels?

C. Yes, *Origen* repeats *Celſus*'s Words ſaying, that "ſome of the "Chriſtians, like Men intoxi-"cated with Fumes of Wine, "who do not mind at all what "they ſay or do, have altered "the

" the original Text of the Goſ-
" pels, ſo that they may admit
" of various, and almoſt infinite
" Readings. And this, (ſays he)
" I ſuppoſe they did out of hu-
" man Policy, that when we preſs
" them home with an Argument,
" they might have the larger
" Scope for their pitiful Evaſi-
" ons."

F. How does *Origen* anſwer this?

C. He confeſſes, that the original Text of the Goſpels had been altered by three Sects, *viz.* the Followers of *Marcion*, *Valentinus*, and *Lucian*. But thinks *'tis no convincing Argument againſt the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion, that ſome Perſons have had the horrid Impudence to corrupt the Goſpels themſelves, and ſo have given an unhappy Riſe to numerous and moſt impious Hereſies*. A glorious Confeſſion to Truth by *Origen*, but not to the Truth of the Goſpels! The Chriſtians not only corrupted the Goſpels, but as Mr. *Toland* ſays, forged Books on one another, and wanting Heathen Teſtimony, forged them too, as well as, 'tis likely, were impoſed upon by the Forgeries of Jews and Heathens, who in the mean while laughed in their Sleeves at the Credulity of Chriſtians.

F. But while you charge the *Saints* with Inconſiſtency, the *Clearer* charges you a *Sinner* with the ſame.

C. How?

F. St. Matthew *has given an Account of guarding and ſealing the Sepulchre; the other Evangeliſts ſay nothing of it. Upon this, you ſay, they tell different Stories. How ſo?* Says the Clearer, *Does a Man who ſays nothing of a Story, tell a different Story, or contradict the Story? Yet this*, ſays he, *is the Conſiderer's Logic*, and to prove it, refers to firſt Edit. p. 36, and 37. third, p. 27.

C. The Words there are theſe: " But why do theſe Evangeliſts " tell different Stories? St. *Mat-* " *thew* one, about guarding and " ſealing the Sepulchre; St. *Mark* " and St. *Luke* another, which " ſhews it was neither guarded " nor ſealed; St. *John* to the " ſame Purpoſe, but different " from both?" That is, St. *John* tells about ſpicing the Body, in a different manner than was by *Mark* and *Luke*, before mentioned; whoſe Relations are irreconcileable, as their Defenders may find, if God give them Underſtanding: Therefore the Senſe of my Words is obvious, and eaſy to be underſtood.

F. The *Clearer* continues, that you *ſay expreſly, in a like Caſe*, " St. *John* ſays not a Word of it, " but denies it all;" firſt Edit. p. 32. third, p. 23.

C. There indeed he has me, and I muſt get off as well as I can. A little of that Chriſtian Charity he beſtows upon the Scriptures, ſometimes to help their natural Senſe, and frequent Infirmities, are unhappily wanted to this Expreſſion. The Words of mine are: " I have not mentioned what " St. *John* ſays of *Chriſt*'s fore- " telling his Reſurrection to his " Diſciples, leſt it ſhould be " thought I ſtifle his Evidence; " I have examined him, and find " he ſays not a Word of it, but " denies it all:" That is, St. *John* ſays not a Word of what the other Evangeliſts ſay of Jeſus's foretelling his Reſurrection to his

Diſciples, but on the contrary denies it, by ſaying, *They knew not the Scriptures, that he muſt riſe again from the Dead.* But if theſe Remarks were given for Arguments, it is a Sign the *Clearer* was diſtreſſed.

F. The *Clearer* ſays, * *Upon this Kind of Reaſoning, if it is Reaſoning, you charge all the four Evangeliſts with Forgery; and ſuppoſe,* "that "*Matthew*'s Story being detect-"ed, *Mark* and *Luke* tell ano-"ther; theirs being alſo confut-"ed, *John* comes and tells a "Story different from all theirs." *And this vehement Charge is founded on this* only, *that* Mark, Luke *and* John *ſay nothing about it.*

C. This is ſo far from being the *only* Thing, that by Reaſon of the *Clearer*'s vehement Charge of me, the *only* Thing upon which my Suppoſition is founded, is overlooked by him: That is, the Inconſiſtencies and Differences in the Hiſtories, which cannot be reconciled without more Forgery.

F. He goes on: *At this Rate, how eaſily may all hiſtorical Facts be confuted? It is but ſaying the Hiſtories are forged, and it requires no good Head, provided there be a good Face, to ſay it of any Hiſtory in the World.*

C. But if this Gentleman errs in his Charge, his Conſequence likewiſe is an Error.

F. But you, ſays the *Clearer, not content to charge the Evangeliſts with Forgery, have forged Things for them by ſaying,* † "Some believe that "Abſurdities and Contradictions "are poſſible to the Power of "God: That he can raiſe up "Children from the Loins of *A-*"*braham* out of the Stones of the "Streets." *You plainly ſaw, that the Paſſage, as it ſtood in St.* Matthew, *afforded no Colour for this Abuſe, and therefore you add,* from the Loins of *Abraham. I deſire the* Reader, ſays he, *to conſider whoſe Forgery this is?*

C. I deſire the *Reader* to conſider, that I only expreſſed it by the Abſurdity of ſome Men's Faith. 'Tis known, that the Jews valued themſelves for being the Seed of *Abraham*, as thoſe to whom the Promiſe was made: *In thy Seed ſhall all the Families of the Earth be bleſſed.* Now we are told, that the Promiſe was made to the Seed of *Abraham* in *Iſaac: In* Iſaac *ſhall thy Seed be called,* (Rom. ix. 7.) who is ſuppoſed to come out of his Loins: *Gen.* xv. 4. But if *Iſaac* was the Son of *Abimelech*, then he was only a Son to *Abraham* by Faith, and came not *out of his Loins.* How am I guilty of forging Things for the Evangeliſts? Since I did not fix it as the Senſe of thoſe Words, for I know not what Senſe to make of them, ſuppoſing *John*, when he ſpoke, pointed to ſome Stones on the Earth, at that Time, as he ſeems to have done by the Words, *theſe Stones.* How they could be raiſed up Children to *Abraham*, more than to any other Man, I confeſs I can no more apprehend, than that ſuch Children ſhould come out of his Loins. But if every one that cannot underſtand, or miſunderſtands a Text of Scripture is guilty of Forgery, I believe I have all the Chriſtians in the World on my Side. There are many Things I cannot conceive, that perhaps others can. Nor can I ſee how I am guilty of Forgery, if I expreſs my Conceptions

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tions by adding ſome Words to the Text to explain it; in many Places it cannot be underſtood without; Whoever would underſtand ſuch Texts, it muſt be according to the Forgery of their own Underſtanding. I cannot ſee any Reaſon of Complaint but this, that we ſhould not forge any Senſe of theſe Things for ourſelves, but our Divine Blackſmiths, whoſe Buſineſs it is, are to forge Things for us; becauſe *by this Craft, they have their Wealth.* Their Interpretation is *the Image that comes down from* Jupiter. This is *their Holy Ghoſt*, which is *to guide us into all Truth*; and thus have we *received their Holy Ghoſt* from the Beginning.

F. The next Thing puts this Gentleman in a Maze, theſe are his Words: *At Page* 67 *of the firſt Edition, and* 54 *of the Third, there occurs one of the moſt extraordinary Paſſages that is any where to be found, and ſhews with what Conſcience the* Conſiderer *applies Scripture to his Purpoſe.* "That "Jeſus at his laſt Departure, ac- "cording to St. *John* xxi. 19, "20. leaves us at all Uncertain- "ties, and went like a wander- "ing Jew the Lord knows "where." The *Clearer* ſtates the Caſe thus: *Our Lord, after his Reſurrection, foretels* Peter *by what Death he ſhould glorify God. St.* Peter *enquires what was to become of St.* John? *Our Lord ſays,* if I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? *Follow thou me,* i. e. *What is it to you what becomes of him? Do you follow the Example I have ſet you, and glorify God by your Death.*

C. Is this Senſe paſt all Diſpute?

F. One would think ſo by his Inference, for he adds, *one may ſometimes ſee what Handle People take to miſrepreſent Scripture; but in this Inſtance, it is difficult to diſcern what could lead to this wild Conceit.*

C. I anſwer, nothing but the apparent Meaning of the Words themſelves: When Jeſus had ſaid unto *Peter, Follow me,* Peter *turning, about, ſeeth the Diſciple whom Jeſus loved following, and ſeeing him, ſaid, Lord what ſhall this Man do?* Jeſus ſaid to *Peter, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me.* Was the Diſciple whom *Peter* then ſaw following Jeſus, ſuffering Death for his Maſter, or in bodily Motion? When *Peter* turned about, and ſaw him following, did he turn from his Maſter's Precept of ſuffering Death for *him*, or was that turning, a bodily Motion? If both theſe Diſciples were ſo moving, they acted according to their Underſtanding of the Precept. And ſince they did not underſtand it in the *Clearer*'s Senſe, but in the Senſe of bodily Motion, as the Hiſtory ſhews, I beg to be excuſed. But at this Rate, how eaſily may the apparent Senſe of Scripture be explained away. Theſe Inſtances, which the *Clearer* has not *ſelected*, but rather *invented*, ſhew how fair an Adverſary he is; and help the Reader to form a Judgment what thoſe other Paſſages are, which he complains of, but does not mention.

F. Before the *Clearer* comes to the Points which more immediately affect the Evidence of the Reſurrection, he takes Notice of what was dropped at the Cloſe of your Introduction, which relates to the Credit of Revelation in general

neral concerning Inſpiration; * "That what is the Foundation of any, much leſs of every falſe Religion, cannot be the Foundation of the true." To this the Gentleman objects thus: *What poor Sophiſtry is this! Cannot this great* Conſiderer *ſee the Difference between a real and a pretended Foundation? Let him try it in his own favourite Virtue, Sincerity. Sincerity is, by common Conſent, the very beſt Foundation of a good Character, and therefore all Knaves pretend to it. Will the* Conſiderer *in this Caſe ſay, that which is the Foundation of every bad Character, cannot be the Foundation of a good one?*

C. I cannot underſtand that this is a parallel Caſe. Every Man in the World knows there is ſuch a Principle in human Nature, as *Sincerity*. But who knows *ſupernatural Inſpiration?* Does it not conſiſt in the Imagination only? And what is it then but an imaginary Principle? I believe, none of my Antagoniſts, nor the Great *Clearer* himſelf, will pretend to do it any more than I do. How can they then contend for the Truth of what they know nothing of? Truth is founded on Realities; Falſity on Fiction: That which is in its own Nature falſe, cannot produce Truth. Beſides, pretended Sincerity is not the Foundation of *every* bad Character, but pretended Inſpiration is the Foundation of *every* falſe Religion, they can be founded on nothing elſe.

F. The *Clearer* ſays, the Paſſage from the *Trial* about Inſpiration, † *was produced only to give you an Opportunity of entering into your darling common Place of abuſing Revelation, and drawing together what has been retailed an hundred Times over by all the little Traders in Infidelity, and has been as often anſwered to the Satisfaction of all ſober Enquirers.*

C. Of his Party only: Of thoſe poor humble Souls that are content with any *Words* their *Leaders* give them inſtead of *Reaſons*; becauſe they have Faith to believe *them* and no Body elſe, and *their* counterfeit Coin to be true, which will not paſs current in other Hands. I deny that my Objections are anwered, therefore need not reply. But was willing, in Converſation with you, to vindicate myſelf, and ſhew the Weakneſs of their Anſwers. If all little Traders in Infidelity, that is, if all Infidels (for Infidelity is no Trade, tho' Faith is) perpetually urge the ſame Objections, it ſeems to me, they have the beſt Pretenſions to true Inſpiration, if there be any ſuch Thing, ſince they ſo greatly harmonize. For my Part, I received my Objections from none; but am glad to hear, that though I am the Maker of my own, others have made the ſame an hundred Times over. When clear and effectual Anſwers cannot be given, the ſame Objections will ever be made, and ſtand good.

F. The next Point that more immediately affects the Credit of the Reſurrection is, the Nature and Quality of the Evidence. The *Clearer* ſays, you *begin with complaining grievouſly, that all the Evidence is on the Side of the Reſurrection, and that you can find none againſt it. And this you think is a very hard Caſe upon you.*

C. But much harder to defend the

* Page 16.

† Page 17.

the Evidence that is on the Side of it. This I delivered not by Way of Complaint, but to ſhew the little Reaſon to expect what ſo plainly appears.

F. He adds, *If you ſhould take it in your Head to prove, that* Cæſar *was not killed in the Senate-houſe, you might begin with the ſame Complaint; for all the Evidence would be on one Side, and all againſt you.*

C. True: And if the Evidence for this Article of Faith was as probable, and as well atteſted, it would be no more queſtioned than that is. But if *Cæſar*'s Death had no better Evidence than the Reſurrection of Jeſus, 'tis likely the *Clearer* himſelf might queſtion it. If he ſhould take it in his Head to diſprove the Aſcenſion of *Romulus*, though all the Evidence be on one Side, and all againſt him; yet, I queſtion much whether he could believe it, even though he was hired to it. That *Cæſar* was killed in the Senate-houſe, there is the concurrent Teſtimony of *Cæſar*'s Friends, as well as Enemies, both as to the Fact itſelf, and its Conſequences; therefore 'tis inconteſtible. But the ſtabbing *Cæſar* in the Senate-houſe, might fail of Credit on unknown and diſagreeing Evidence, though all combined to aſſert it. A miraculous Fact on ſuch bad Evidence, is much more incredible. Any Action ſaid to be done by Man, which is above human Power, ſeems to me to require more than human Proof: But if it have leſs than reaſonable Proof, it is incredible to Men that reaſon about it. Mr. *Lacy*, one of the *French Prophets*, publiſhed a Book in *London*, entitled, *A Cry from the Deſart*; in which is an Account of a famous Miracle, done by Mr. *Clary* at *Canves* near *Serignau*, in *France*, *Auguſt* 1703, and by them ſaid to be atteſted by a Thouſand; which I do not know was ever contradicted, though no Body but themſelves believed it, if themſelves did. What may they not ſay of *Whitefield* ſome Ages hence? Is it not miraculous that he ſhould, without any Bribe of Loaves and Fiſhes, draw together ſo often, five or ſeven thouſand Men, beſides Women and Children, to liſten with Attention to the charming Nonſenſe of his Preaching.

F. The *Clearer* ſays, * you *imagine there was anciently a great Stock of Evidence againſt the Truth of the Reſurrection, but that it has been unhappily loſt, or deſtroyed*; becauſe you ſaid, "That Books have "been wrote by *Porphyry*, *Celſus*, "and others, which contained "what the Chriſtians thought "were beſt anſwered by ſtifling "and burning. That it is well "known from ſome Fragments "of them in *Origen*, that they "contradicted what is related in "the Evangeliſts." *Fragments of* Porphyry, *in* Origen, *could not be, for* Origen *was dead before* Porphyry *ſet Pen to Paper.*—Porphyry *could not be above Twenty-one Years old when* Origen *died.*—*There was about an hundred Years between* Celſus *and* Porphyry.

C. This may be true: I am ſenſible there is nothing of *Porphyry* in *Origen*, nor did I intend to ſay there was, I only meant to ſay, *ſome Fragments of Books in* Origen; but 'tis ſo negligently expreſſed, I own, that my Senſe may

* Page 18.

may be here eaſily miſtaken, without ſtraining the natural Senſe of the Words, as they are careleſly thrown together. If the grand Fact in Debate was liable to the like Exceptions, then indeed, the Evidence of it would be *cleared.* I am ſenſible this is an Error in my wording it. It ſhould be read thus: It is well known from ſome Fragments of the Books of *Celſus* in *Origen*, that they contradicted what is related by the Evangeliſts.

F. And ſo do you, ſays the *Clearer, but what then? Is the Credit of any Hiſtory the worſe, becauſe it is wantonly contradicted, without Evidence or Authority, of any Sort, to ſupport the Contradiction?*

C. No. But that I contradict it *wantonly,* is what cannot be proved. And that the Credit of this Hiſtory is without harmonious Evidence, or the Authority of Reaſon, is what they cannot diſprove.

F. Celſus *and* Porphyry *were juſt ſuch Witneſſes,* the *Clearer* urges, *againſt the Goſpel, as you are; and for Want of Evidence to contradict the Evangeliſts, they were forced to rely upon the Diſagreements, which they ſuppoſed were to be found in the ſeveral Accounts given by the Evangeliſts.*

C. And theſe Arguments were the beſt they could uſe, againſt them that were capable of believing no Evidence but their own, and reſolved to deny whatever contradicted it. It was beſt to ſhew ſuch, the Contradiction of their own Evidence, which they could not deny. The beſt and only Way of Reaſoning with Men, is by Arguments drawn from Premiſes they themſelves acknowledge. Therefore, whether there was any good Evidence againſt the Goſpel Hiſtory in *Celſus*'s Time, or no, he thought beſt to confound it by its own Evidence. If the Witneſſes for a Fact cannot prove it, there is no Occaſion to bring any other to diſprove it.

F. Celſus *lived at no great Diſtance from the apoſtolic Age: At a Time when all Religions were tolerated but the Chriſtian; when no Evidence was ſtifled, no Books deſtroyed, but thoſe of Chriſtians.*

C. This, to me, is ſcarce credible, that under the *Roman* Government, all Religions ſhould be tolerated but Chriſtians, and that their Books alone ſhould be deſtroyed, unleſs they ſuffered under the Name of Jews, being originally a judaic Sect. Or unleſs the Chriſtians were a very immoral Sect, who exalted Faith and debaſed Morality. For St. *Peter* reaſons well when he ſays, 1 Epiſt. iii. 13. *Who will harm you, if you be Followers of that which is good?*

F. But at the Time *Celſus* lived, *he had only the Goſpel to ſearch for Evidence againſt the Goſpel. A ſtrong Proof that there never had been Books of any Credit in the World, that queſtioned the Goſpel Facts, when ſo ſpiteful, and ſo artful an Adverſary as* Celſus *made no Uſe of them.*

C. I have already obſerved, that the Arguments ſo founded againſt the Chriſtians, were the hardeſt for them to anſwer. But whether there were no other, I believe cannot be proved. Or whether the Meanneſs or Contemptibleneſs of the Sect, *which was every where ſpoken againſt,*

did

did not render them unworthy the Oppoſition of the Learned, till Numbers made them conſiderable. On this Conſideration, *Celſus* might have been one of the firſt that wrote againſt them. But if it had not been for the Sake of *Origen*'s Anſwer, 'tis evident, the Objections of *Celſus* had never been known. And ſuch Anſwers as *Origen* made, if in our Time, would be looked upon as evaſive and trifling. The Body of Faith has increaſed and gathered Strength by Age, for I perceive 'tis better vindicated *now*, than in its Infancy. Education and long Cuſtom has made it ſtrong; *Celſus* choſe this Method of Conviction, to argue from their own Goſpels rather than any other, for drawing to a Concluſion, ſpeaking to the Chriſtians, he adds: "All I have ſaid has been borrowed from your own approved Authors, ſo that I need not produce any *other* Teſtimonies; ſince the Edge of your own Weapons is ſufficiently turned on yourſelves." Hence, I preſume, that *Celſus* had *other* Teſtimonies to produce on his Side of the Argument, but did not uſe them, becauſe he thought them not neceſſary; ſo that this was a Method of Choice. In anſwer to this, *Origen* tells us, that he has been pleaſed *to interlard it with Abundance of ridiculous Stories, that the Evangeliſts never thought of.* If he had not thoſe Stories from ſome others, *Origen* would no doubt have told us they were of his own Invention, and never produced by any but *Celſus* in the World before; but this he does not charge him with, not even when *Celſus* tells the moſt ſcandalous Story of the Virgin *Mary*. But if *Celſus* had no Arguments againſt the Goſpel, but what the Goſpel afforded; neither did *Origen* find where, or how to apply for any other Evidence in its Favour, than what he there found, tho' he ſeems, like the *Clearer*, to have wanted neither Learning nor Cunning to make the beſt of a bad Cauſe, and to ſlander, deſpiſe and inſult his Adverſary, and ſing *te Deum* when he was beaten.

F. What does *Origen* ſay, to obviate that Scandal of *Celſus*, concerning the holy Virgin.

C. All that he ſays, amounts to no more than this, that ſo pure a Soul as that of Jeſus, could never come from ſuch impure Embraces.

F. The *Clearer* ſays, that Celſus *admitted Chriſt's Miracles*; the Difference between him and *Origen* lies in accounting for them, *the one aſcribing them to the Power of God, the other to the Power of Magic.*

C. Granting that Jeſus did Miracles, *Celſus*, in the Perſon of a Jew, does this to try how the Chriſtians could vindicate them from that Imputation; againſt which, *Origen* makes but a poor Plea, when he ſays, *But tho' we ſhould grant, that it is difficult for us to determine preciſely, by what Power our Saviour wrought his Miracles; yet, 'tis very plain, that the Chriſtians made Uſe of no Enchantments, unleſs the Name of Jeſus, and ſome Paſſages of the holy Scriptures, were a Kind of ſacred Spell.*

F. If *Celſus* was a Jew, he muſt needs give Credit to Miracles.

C. It appears he was no Jew, for he ſays, "that Judaiſm, with

"which

" which the Chriſtian Religion " has a very cloſe Connection, " has all along been a barbarous " Sect" *Origen* obſerves, that Celſus *never reckoned the Jews among the wiſe Nations of the World*, that he treats Moſes *as a notorious and ſhameful Impoſtor*, and takes the People that were governed by him, to be extremely ignorant and credulous.

F. What may we then ſuppoſe *Celſus* to have been?

C. Origen ſuppoſes him to have been an Epicurean, and if ſo the Matter is out of all Diſpute, that he believed no Miracles nor Magic, or Diabolical Power. *Origen* quotes theſe Sentences of his, which ſhews him to have been, without all Doubt, a Philoſopher: " He adviſes Men to embrace no " Opinion, but under the Con- " duct of impartial Reaſon, on " Account of the many, and " groſs Errors, to which the " contrary Practice will ſhame- " fully and unavoidably expoſe " us." Elſe-where, he ſays, " As the Sun, which enlightens " every Thing by its piercing " Rays, immediately diſcovers " it ſelf to us, by the glorious " Light which it tranſmits over " the whole Sphere by Turns; " ſo your pretended Saviour, had " he been God, or the Son of " God, would have reſembled " that glorious Luminary."

F. What Opinion had *Celſus* of the Goſpel Miracles?

C. It is certain he did not believe them, for he treats them with the greateſt Contempt and Ridicule imaginable. He wonders, " that the Angel which " was diſpatched from God for " the Safety of his Son, when " young, could not as eaſily pre- " ſerve him in *Judea*, as in *E-* " *gypt.*" *Concerning the Dove that deſcended upon our Saviour, at his Baptiſm*, ſays *Origen*, *he would fain have the whole Account, to paſs for a falſe and trifling Story.* And as to his Death, ſays *Origen*, *This pretended Jew goes on, and is ready to ſplit his Sides with laughing at the Earthquake, and ridicules the more than ordinary Darkneſs, that were the* awful *Concomitants of our Saviour's Sufferings*, &c.

F. But what does *Celſus* ſay of the Miracles wrought by Chriſt himſelf?

C. He repreſents the Chriſtians ſaying, " Our Saviour was the " Son of God, becauſe he cured " the lame, and blind, and " raiſed a few from the Dead; " as we, poor Creatures that we " are, are ready to imagine."— *He calls the miraculous Stories of* Jeſus, a Company of old Wives Fables, *which you impoſe on us*, ſaid he, *and have not the Senſe to give them the leaſt Colour of Reaſon.* ——And as ſpeaking to Jeſus, ſays, *What did you ever ſay or do, that was worthy of Admiration, though you was openly challenged to give convincing Proofs, that you was the Son of God*, &c. Theſe are the Proofs of his admitting Chriſt's Miracles, which except the *Clearer* had affirmed, I ſhould not have mentioned, nor ſought after.

F. The *Clearer* tells us, that Origen's *Anſwer is not a general Reply to* Celſus, *but a minute Examination of all his Objections, even of thoſe that appeared to* Origen *moſt frivolous.*

C. Them *chiefly*, I ſuppoſe, for *Origen*, no doubt, like the *Clearer*, took

took the chiefeſt Care to anſwer the eaſieſt Objections.

F. He ſays, *Origen ſtates the Objections of* Celſus *in his own Words, in the Order* Celſus *had placed them.*

C. So does the *Clearer* ſtate mine, but ſometimes miſtates, and miſtakes them.

F. Celſus then, as it happens, he ſays, *is ſafe, and you need not lament over him any more.*

C. He is as faithfully preſerved, by *Origen*, as perhaps *the Reſurrection conſidered* is, by *the Evidence of the Reſurrection cleared.* They that can abſolutely depend on the Veracity of a Party, muſt have a great deal of partial Faith, and Faith of Aſſurance.

F. What Lamentation you may be allowed to make for *Porphyry*, I do not know; for *only ſome diſperſed Fragments of him are to be found in* Euſebius *and* Jerom. However, this you ought to lament, that you have mixed *Porphyry* with *Celſus*, in *Origen.*

C. I do. I have owned the Fault, and ſhewn how it is to be corrected, and hope my Adverſaries will learn to do the like, when they are convicted of Errors, to mend them, that Truth may be glorified; for I argue for Conviction, not for Conqueſt.

F. So you muſt be content to follow the Steps of your great Leaders; Celſus, Porphyry, Julian, *&c. to ſearch the Goſpel for Objections againſt the Goſpel.*

C. I am content with that Liberty.

F. Why this (the *Clearer* ſays) *is another Hardſhip, and the Subject of another Complaint*; for you ſaid, *Can it be expected, an equitable Iſſue ſhould be obtained from what may be fairly reaſoned out of their own Reports?*

C. It is not to be expected, but it may be done, and I have fairly done it; perhaps contrary to the Expectation of all who read without Enquiry. The Reports betray the Facts reported.

F. But by that Expreſſion, he ſuggeſts you had no Proſpect of doing it; and therefore ſays, *If you had no better Hopes, why did you trouble yourſelf, and the World? Did you propoſe, becauſe nothing could be* fairly *reaſoned out of the Goſpels, to reaſon ſomething out of it* unfairly. *You have indeed done ſo*, (he ſays) *but did not, he ſuppoſes, mean to give Warning of it.*

C. This is *unfairly* ſaid, and falſely inſinuated. I ſaw plainly before I begun, that the Penmen of thoſe Books, ſeem to have had ſo little Direction from the holy infallible Spirit, that it ſeems rather to have left them to themſelves, and to their own Confuſion; or it has been baſely corrupted and interpolated ſince, with forged Stories. I was obliged to impute the Errors in them to one of theſe, in my *Reſurrection conſidered*; and I thought the laſt was the beſt, and would give the leaſt Offence.

F. But what Objection have you to the Evidence in the *Trial?*

C. "Can that be eſteemed a "fair Trial, where the Eviden-"ces are only on one Side of the "Queſtion?"

F. Why not? Was ever full and clear Evidence rejected, becauſe there was no Evidence to be produced againſt it? The Caſe will be always ſo, where the Truth is notorious.

C. Right. But the Objection here lies, that the Evidence is not

not clear and full, and therefore the Truth is not notorious. Were it ſo, it would not admit of ſuch a Field of Debate. If the Truth was notorious, Men could not find in the Goſpel, Objections againſt the Goſpel. To do this, Unbelievers think, there is no Occaſion to reaſon any Thing *unfairly* out of it. The Witneſſes that do not agree, deſtroy their own Evidence; and yet, the *Clearer* owns, (p. 33.) that *all depends upon the Credit of the Goſpel Hiſtory*; and therefore it is to be lamented, that any Thing ſhould appear in it, which is juſtly queſtionable, and a proper Subject of Complaint; that the Credit of theſe Goſpels were fixed by the Church, after the peculiar Marks of the Holy Spirit had left it, long after the Gift of diſcerning Spirits, and even of Truth itſelf was loſt, by the perpetual Factions and Superſtitions that prevailed in it; when common Senſe was confounded by Faith, and Reaſon caſt off as a dangerous Guide; after ſo many ſpurious Goſpels aroſe, and were nouriſhed by the contending Parties, that it required no leſs than a miraculous Power, or Spirit of Divination, to diſtinguiſh the Genuine from the Apocryphal; and the Fathers of the Church having abandoned maſculine Senſe, and ſound Judgment, were become ſilly, hot-headed, and impertinent old Women. It is certain, they were always divided into Parties, and ever condemning one another for never being in the Right. How can pure and untainted Water be expected from ſuch muddy Streams! Or the refulgent Rays of divine Truth from ſuch an impenetrable Cloud of Obſcurity, and winding Maze of inextricable Perplexities as they were involved in! He that attempts to ſeek Truth, being governed by any Authority or Spirit but that of Reaſon, is loſt in the endleſs Maze of Uncertainty and Confuſion. Behold ye Sons of Men, Reaſon is the God incarnate! And he that has forſaken God, is forſaken of him. He that will not follow the Light of God's Wiſdom, is juſtly left in the Darkneſs of his own Folly. He that racks his Reaſon to defend Errors, crucifies the Word of God between Thieves: And his Reward is to be tormented in the fiery Gulph of his boundleſs burning Paſſions; inſtead of treading the pure Plains of Æther with a maſculine Soul, and upright Countenance.

F. Well, but wherein conſiſts the Difficulty of your Taſk, in finding the Truth of the Caſe in Diſpute?

C. "To find the Truth of a "Caſe by the Teſtimony of par-"tial Evidence combined againſt "it, muſt be owned to be a dif-"ficult Taſk;" at leaſt one might reaſonably imagine it to be ſo, tho' in this Caſe it is not.

F. But how do you know the Witneſſes are partial? * *It is not a Thing to be taken for granted; and Proof you bring none. And is it not the Purpoſe and Drift of your whole Book, to ſhew them contradicting one another in almoſt every Inſtance? How then were they combined together?*

C. When ſeveral Perſons agree to aſſert a Fact, which even their own

* Page 23.

own Evidence diſproves when compared and examined; it ſhews them both partial and combined.

F. Why did you not tell us what was their View in combining togegether? It coſt them their Lives: You ſee what their Combination tended to.

C. How many Millions in all Ages run the Hazard of loſing their Lives, that they may live well while they do live. But I Queſtion much, if the Apoſtles died miſerably and violently, as 'tis pretended. I doubt much of the Truth of partial Hiſtory, and all eccleſiaſtic Hiſtory, written by Eccleſiaſtics on that Side, is ſuch.

F. Another Queſtion you have choſen to debate, is about the Nature of Chriſt's Kingdom. Many Paſſages are produced from the Trial, *all ſpeaking* TO THIS EFFECT: That Jeſus did not pretend to a ſpiritual Kingdom, *&c.* * *Among theſe Quotations, ſome are taken from the Mouth of the Pleader againſt the Reſurrection, and aſcribed to the* Author *of the* Trial.

C. Be it ſo; if all the Quotations are *to this Effect*, where is the Damage to the Author or Argument?

F. But this happens ſo frequently, that it would be endleſs to take Notice of it as often as it happens, the Clearer ſays.

C. His Complaints are ſo falſe, or ſo little to the Purpoſe, that they are not worth my while to regard, but to undeceive thoſe whom his Complaints may deceive.

F. Does the Conſiderer, cries he, *enter into the Argument as it ſtands in the* Trial? *No. But he takes the Paſſages independently of the Argument, of which they are a Part; and thinks that, taken by themſelves, they are not true. Be it ſo; what then does it ſignify to the Fact of the Reſurrection which he was to diſprove? Why all this Parade of many Quotations from the* Trial, *ſince they do not relate to the Point in Diſpute? Some good Friend, I ſuppoſe, had aſked the* Conſiderer *theſe Queſtions, which he could not anſwer; and though he was unwilling to part with ſo many Quotations at once, yet to prevent the ſame Queſtions being aſked him again, he has, in his new Edition,* p. 8. *confeſſed, that he this,* (i. e. the ancient Prophecies of this Kingdom) *myſtically or conditionally true, it concerns not the Reſurrection.*

C. The ſame is confeſſed in the *firſt* Edition, p. 17. though the *Clearer* could not clearly ſee it, which one would have thought ſo clear-ſighted a Man might have done; but then he could not have ſeen an Occaſion for Complaint and this Inſinuation, and therefore 'tis to be feared he *would* not ſee it.

F. You think it is not true that Chriſt declined temporal Power †, *and go on to produce Prophecies, that God would give him the Throne of his Father* David, *and ſay, that he was called King of Iſrael, King of the Jews, and rebuked not thoſe who gave him the Title. And why ſhould he rebuke them, ſince he claimed that Title, and never denied that he was King of the Jews?*

C. Very good. And therefore Jeſus told his twelve Diſciples, that when he enjoyed the Glory of ſitting on his Throne, he would make them twelve Judges, give them great Poſſeſſions, reward them an hundred Fold in this

* Page 24. † Page 25.

World, and everlaſting Life ſhould be thrown to them into the Bargain. *Matth.* xix. 28, 29. What did Jeſus mean by this? Can it be proved to have any Meaning foreign to the literal Senſe?

F. But that is to be when Chriſt comes again in Glory. Judges are of no uſe till the Court of Judgment opens. This is to be at Doomſday.

C. I dare ſay the Apoſtles did not expect to wait ſo long before they were to be put in Commiſſion. I do not doubt but they will be ſo when their Maſter comes again; then is to be the Kingdom of the Meſſiah, which they called the Kingdom of Heaven or of God: To keep up their Expectation of it, they were ordered to pray for its coming, and to preach that it was then at Hand. Chriſtians have hitherto prayed, *Thy Kingdom come*, above ſeventeen hundred Years in vain. Our Lord God Chriſt is as one that hears us not, and as one that has forgotten to return. But the Diſciples had Reaſon to expect it before they died, if we may believe what we read: Or what mean theſe Words of Chriſt to them? *Verily I ſay unto you, there be ſome ſtanding here who ſhall not taſte of Death, till they ſee the Kingdom of God come with Power*, Mat. xvi. 28.

F. It means a ſpiritual Kingdom to be ſure; for Chriſt never had a Temporal.

C. Nor a Spiritual over the Nation of the Jews; therefore he was King of the Jews in no Senſe; and ſo means neither.

F. The Preaching of the Word, or the Goſpel, was the Kingdom of God, *Rom.* x. 1.

C. Then it was a Kingdom in Word only.

F. But the Faith that was promulgated by the Goſpel, was the Kingdom of God, *Rom.* x. 8.

C. Then this is the Kingdom of Faith only.

F. The Word of Faith ſignifies Power, by which Devils were caſt out of many whom they had bodily poſſeſſed, and ſo the Kingdom of God was come unto them, *Matth.* xii. 28.

C. Yet we ſee nothing of this Kingdom; it is not come unto us, for either the Word of our Goſpel, or our Goſpel Faith, is not able to caſt out Devils; for we ſee no ſuch Things done, or otherwiſe there are no ſuch to caſt out, nor do we know whether there ever were ſuch Devils in the World.

F. The Faith of the Goſpel caſts out Sins, which are Devils of a worſe Kind: How many has *Whiteſield* converted, known to have been notorious Sinners before their Converſion, but now are ſanctified!

C. And yet who have in common been more wicked than Believers? What People pretending to Godlineſs have been more ungodly? How are the Methodiſts better than others now? Some of them are by their Converſion made leſs openly profane, and are more zealouſly religious, and preciſe in Ceremonies, but as ignorant as ever, and more rigidly cenſorious; their Malice againſt thoſe that are Unbelievers in their Way, increaſes with their Zeal: They can, with a Chriſtian Conſcience, hate their Friends and Relations for Chriſt's Sake, while they pretend to love *their* Enemies,

mies; for they can hate whom they ſuppoſe to be Chriſt's Enemies, can burn and be burnt for Faith, and deſpiſe moral Virtue in others. Thus Converſion is nothing but Conceitedneſs, Enthuſiaſm and Superſtition, a going from one vicious Extreme to another, from being public-ſpirited Sinners, to be recluſe and worthleſs Bigots, from being openly profane, and ſinning without Fear or Wit, to harbour more inward Sins, Cenſoriouſneſs, holy Scandal, or ſanctified Malice; prodigally waſting their Subſtance, Time and Labour, neceſſary for the Support of themſelves and their Families; thus bringing them to Beggary for Chriſt's Sake, to the Scandal and Reproach of their Profeſſion, and Injury to themſelves and Society. A religious Running from Place to Place, to hear Preaching and Praying, with a Dependence on Providence to make up the Defects of their Negligence, is but pious Lazineſs; their Heads are made giddy with Lies, and amuſed with Nonſenſe. Lo, theſe are the Fruits of this Chriſtian Converſion! Theſe are the Productions of the New Birth!

F. But there are ſome good People amongſt them.

C. Yes, there are, no doubt; and theſe might have been as good as they now are, had they belonged to any other Society. The Head being converted to Opinions, makes not the Heart better, unleſs to thoſe Opinions that teach the Government of the Heart, the Paſſions, and the right Conduct of Life, which is to enjoy it with Prudence; to make, and be made wiſer and better, in reality not enthuſiaſtically; a philoſophical Converſion to uſe and follow Reaſon, not to a ſpiritual Lullaby, and a Faith without Foundation, which rouzes and excites the Fancy; but rocks the Underſtanding into a Lethargy. But go on; What ſays the *Clarer?*

F. That you ſeem not to know, that there never was a Queſtion between Jews and Chriſtians, Whether Jeſus was, or pretended to be a temporal Prince?

C. I ſuppoſe it will not admit of a Queſtion.

F. The *Clearer* ſays, *Both Sides agree that he neither was, nor pretended to be.*

C. Why then did the Jews, in Oppoſition to him, cry out, *We have no King but* CÆSAR? And why was the Accuſation on his Croſs written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS? Was he put to Death for being, or pretending to be a ſpiritual Prince of another World? Did the Prophecies relate to that?

F. Had not the Prophets declared him to be a great Prince, there would have been no Diſpute whether he was to be a ſpiritual or a temporal Prince. Quoting therefore the Prophecies, will not determine the Queſtion; for the Doubt is not whether there are ſuch Prophecies or no? But what is the Meaning of them?

C. Prophecies with an unknown Meaning, are Prophecies without a Meaning, and therefore no Prophecies. A miraculous Spirit has doubtleſs a miraculous Meaning; therefore I can never believe any Man knows what the Prophecies mean, till I know he has the ſame Spirit by working Miracles: For if the Meaning is not known by the Words, they are fallacious; and I would fain know by what

Rule we may know their Meaning, or that they mean any Thing.

F. You inſinuated, that Jeſus confeſſed to *Pilate*, that *his Kingdom was not of this World**, for political Ends, as if the Time and Place then required ſuch Confeſſion. *There is one to whom you muſt anſwer it.*

C. Judge nothing before the Time till the Lord come, 1 Cor. iv. 5.

F. In the mean time, how will you anſwer to reaſonable Enquirers the Diſingenuity of concealing, that Jeſus, ſo far from denying himſelf to be the King of the Jews, confeſſed it before Pilate?

C. I aſk if it be not diſingenuous to ſay, *Thou ſayeſt*, is a Confeſſion; which I think implies, Do I ſay ſo? This Charge is of thyſelf, or others, *John* xviii. 34. Inſtead of this being a Confeſſion, it ſeems to me to be tantamount to a Denial.

F. The *Clearer* demands with what Conſcience you aſk, How it appears by any Thing recorded, that Jeſus explained away the kingly Office of the Meſſias? *Explain it away*; *No, he inſiſted on it to the laſt.*

C. With what Conſcience does the *Clearer* thus equivocate? No, I find Jeſus did not explain it away; he left that for his Followers to do; and yet they inſiſt on it that it is not done! Well, they have the Knack of Wonder-working yet!

F. If you mean to aſk, whether ever Jeſus explained away the temporal Kingdom, it is manifeſt from every Part, and every Circumſtance of his Life, that he never claimed it.

C. Becauſe *his Hour was not yet come.*

F. If you mean to aſk, whether ever Jeſus explained the Nature of the Kingdom of the Meſſias; what more is wanting than his Confeſſion to Pilate, *that he was the King of the Jews, and that his Kingdom was not of this World.*

C. Such a Confeſſion as the *Clearer* aſſerts, that Jeſus confeſſed before *Pilate*, that he was King of the Jews, is wanting to prove the Truth of the former Part of his Aſſertion; and Chriſt's explaining the Nature of his Kingdom to his Diſciples, is wanting to prove the latter Part of the *Clearer*'s Aſſertion. When Chriſt told *Pilate* where his Kingdom was not, I ſuppoſe *Pilate* knew not where it was. Perhaps this Kingdom might have been more intelligible to *Caiaphas* the High Prieſt, a Spiritual Ruler: But to him he talked otherwiſe, *Hereafter you ſhall ſee the Son of Man coming in the Clouds of Heaven*; (*Matt.* xxvi. 64.) except that Sight was not to be in this World. But if Jeſus was *King of the Jews, and his Kingdom was not of this World*, then he was King of the Jews in another World; and ſo the Jews in this World ſent him out of it, that he might take Poſſeſſion of his Kingdom. But if Chriſt diſclaimed all temporal Power, why was the Government alarmed, and Jeſus looked on as a Perſon dangerous to the State? "If he explained "away the temporal Majeſty of "the Meſſiah, Jeſus was the beſt "Friend among the Jews the *Ro*"*man* Government had, to pre"ſerve the People from enthuſi"aſtic Seditions. If this be true, "it was the worſt Policy in the "World for the *Romans* to put "him to Death," ſaid I.

F. Who

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F. Who told you the Roman *Government was alarmed?* queries the *Clearer* *.

C. I ſaid the Government was alarmed, and the Exangeliſts ſay as much; but why does he ſay *Roman* Government?

F. The *Clearer* affirms you ſaid ſo, and that you pretend to have it from the *Trial*; but according to Cuſtom, you have taken the Objector's Words for the Words of the Author.

C. According to his Cuſtom, he has again broke the Ninth Commandment, which ſays, *Thou ſhalt not bear falſe Witneſs.* I did not mention *Roman* Government, tho' he has charged me with it. He grants *that the Jewiſh Government indeed was.* And if my Words are true, that the Government was alarmed, what Matter whether I had them from the *Objector* to, or *Author* of the *Trial?* That Author does not look upon it ſcandalous to be charged with ſpeaking Truth. Whether theſe Words were the *Objector*'s or the *Author*'s, 'tis what one ſays, the other grants, and the Evangeliſts ſhew. May I not complain of this *Clearer* in the Words of *Ahab* concerning *Benhadad*, (1 Kings xx. 7.) *Mark I pray you, and ſee how this Man ſeeketh Miſchief.* 'Tis marvellous *elſe how the* Clearer *could read, could tranſcribe theſe Words into his Book, and not feel* that the Word *Roman* was not added to *Government*, till he added it. Is this Man a fair Antagoniſt, who makes what is no Crime a Matter of Accuſation; and to make his Scandal ſtick, charges me with what I am not guilty? Can ſuch a Man have Truth or Honeſty at Heart?

F. What you have in View, the *Clearer* ſays, *in this confuſed Diſcourſe about Chriſt's Kingdom* †, he cannot gueſs.

C. Then let him not pretend to it.

F. Nay, but you are to underſtand by that he can gueſs.

C. You are fit, I find, to interpret ſacred Writings. Well, what does he gueſs?

F. That you ſeem to think, Jeſus underſtood the Prophecies to relate to a temporal Kingdom, and in Conſequence claimed it, and did not renounce a Kingdom of this World till driven to it by Deſpair and Neceſſity. But where, he aſks, *did you learn this Secret? Not from the Goſpel-Hiſtory, nor yet from any Enemies of the Goſpel, whether Jews or Heathens; who never have charged Jeſus with ſetting up for temporal Power.*

C. I muſt confeſs I do not know that. It was alledged at his Trial, that he aimed at being King of the Jews, as the Title of his Accuſation on the Croſs ſhews. A ſpiritual King is a Subterfuge of Neceſſity.

F. One would imagine it impoſſible, ſays he, *for any one who had read the four Goſpels, or any one of them, to entertain this Conceit. Look into the Goſpel; every Page will afford a Proof, that Jeſus, though he claimed to be the King of the Jews foretold in the ancient Prophets, yet he diſclaimed all temporal Power and Greatneſs.*

C. How is Jeſus in this Senſe King of the Jews? For they diſ-

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own him to this Day: He is the King of the Gentiles rather.

F. The Gentiles that believe in him are Jews in the Spirit: *He is not a Jew who is one outwardly*; and Chriſt is a King not in his Fleſh but in the Spirit.

C. So then the King and Kingdom in the Spirit mean nothing leſs than what they expreſs in the Letter. Methinks theſe ſpiritual Believers ſeem to have forſaken Jeſus Chriſt, and loſt Sight of him; and have taken up with a Spirit in his Room.

F. Does not St. *Paul* ſay, *Henceforth know we no Man after the Fleſh; yea though we have known Chriſt after the Fleſh, yet henceforth know we him ſo no more?*

C. And yet the ſame Apoſtle ſaid, He deſired to *know nothing but Jeſus Chriſt and him crucified*; and as he himſelf ſays, he was put to Death or crucified in the *Fleſh*. And the ſame Apoſtle deſired *to know the Love of Chriſt which paſſeth Knowledge*. How is that?

F. It paſſeth the Knowledge of thoſe that do not believe in him. All Abſurdities to carnal Men, are reconciled to the ſpiritual Man; for *he knows all Things*.

C. Or pretends to it, if he be never ſo ignorant. The ſpiritual Senſe is the Art of holy Wire-drawing, to put any Senſe on any Subject. O how precious a Hiſtory could I write of *Jack the Giant Killer ſpiritualized!* Carnal Minds indeed, and Infidels, might laugh at it; but they might read it for their Diverſion, and the Spiritual for their Edification. How gravely might it go down with theſe, if they ſhould take it into their Heads that it was wrote by an inſpired Author! How angry would they be to hear ſo ſerious a Thing ridiculed! For as Mr. *Chandler* has proved in his *Prime Miniſtry of Joſeph*, that *any* Thing means *every* Thing in the *Hebrew*, it does the ſame in the Language of *Canaan* or the Spirit. Well, what Proofs does the *Clearer* produce, that Jeſus diſclaimed all temporal Power and Greatneſs? What Reaſons has he, that Jeſus ſhould not be externally and literally a *King*, as well as *Prieſt* and *Prophet?* Had he ſuffered only in Spirit, and triumphed over the earthly Majeſties of the World, it had been a more noble Character than this mock Majeſty. Produce the *Clearer*'s mighty Arguments, and let them be examined.

F. When one of the Scribes offered to become his Diſciple, what Encouragement did he find? Poſſibly this Scribe might conceive Hopes of having a Share in the temporal Kingdom, which he and his Countrymen expected. But our Lord undeceives him, and tells him, the Foxes have Holes, and the Birds of the Air have Neſts, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his Head, Matth. viii. 20.

C. It might be ſo at that Time. I am miſtaken if the *Clearer* would have been his Diſciple in the ſame Caſe. Whatever his Circumſtances then were, the Succeſſors of his Diſciples have feathered their Neſts finely ſince.

F. * *When our Lord ſent out his twelve Diſciples, he orders them expreſly* to preach, ſaying, the Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand. *In order to eſtabliſh this Kingdom, what Power does he give them?* Were they

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they to *iſſue out Proclamations, notifying that the victorious Prince was come, and calling upon all his Subjects to arm, and attend him? Nothing leſs.*

C. Any Pretender might have done thus; therefore had he done ſo, it had been no Proof that his Pretenſions were juſt.

F. He gives them Power againſt unclean Spirits, to heal all Diſeaſes.

C. Had he given them Power againſt the unclean Spirit of Tyranny in Church and State, a moſt pernicious Diſeaſe which has infected both, but eſpecially his own Kingdom the Chriſtian Church, he had ſhewn himſelf a public-ſpirited Being. Had this been the Throne of his Glory, it would have been a glorious Throne: He had then fulfilled the Prophecy, that *Men ſhould beat their Swords into Plow-ſhares, and their Spears into Pruning-Hooks. Nation ſhould not have lift up Sword againſt Nation, neither ſhould they have learned War any more.*

F. As to the Condition of the Diſciples in this World, he tells them they ſhould be brought before Governors for his Sake, and be hated of all Men; and adviſes them, for their Safety, when perſecuted in one City, to flee into another. Are theſe Proofs of his claiming temporal Power?

C. No; nor of his having any Power at all to defend himſelf or his Servants. But this may have been to fulfil a Prophecy in *Joel* iii. 9, 10. *Prepare War among the Gentiles, beat your Plow-ſhares into Swords, and your Pruning-Hooks into Spears.* Since Perſecution has ever attended his coming to this Day. Though our Lord caſt out ſo many Devils, this Devil hath never been caſt out of the Church by Church-Power; for that eſtabliſhes it. Has our bleſſed Lord, bleſſed the World with a Religion that has always been attended with Fire and Sword? Did he know the evil Conſequences that would attend it, and yet never prevented it? Did he know the Power of Satan? And could he vanquiſh Legions of Devils at a Word of Command? And was it *for this Purpoſe the Son of God was manifeſted, that he might deſtroy the Works of the Devil?* Heb. iii. 14. Why then did he go away without doing it? Why did he leave this World to be a Hell, and the Kingdom of the Devil; himſelf and his Servants, Fugitives and Victims to his Power, when he had Power to prevent it? And ſince he ſent his Miniſters to proclaim, *The Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand, is nigh unto you, even at the Doors*, why did he not redeem this World from the Devil's Power, and make it a Colony of the Kingdom of Heaven? If Jeſus never claimed any temporal Power, his Followers have done it, and practiſed it with a Witneſs. If their own Story be true, they begun it early. Why were *Ananias* and *Sapphira* killed for not giving them all their Money? Shooting Men to Death with Powder, which makes no Noiſe, is as much Murder as ſhooting them with that which makes a Report. A ſecret Way of killing Men without Law, is as criminal as by public Violence. If the Kingdom of Chriſt be no temporal Kingdom, then that Church which claims temporal Power is not his Church; and then theſe of that Church, who under a Cloke of

Godlineſs erect the pretended Kingdom of Chriſt on temporal Power, are no Subjects of that Kingdom.

F. The *Clearer* goes on, *In like manner, and with like Commiſſion, he ſent out the Seventy Diſciples; they return with Joy, and relate to him their Succeſs, Lord, even the Devils are ſubject to us through thy Name. You ſee it was the Kingdom of Satan he came to deſtroy, and not the Kingdom of* Cæſar.

C. And yet Satan's Kingdom, as I have obſerved, is not deſtroyed: And we are told of no particular Feats done by the Diſciples while their Maſter was alive. O that he had deſtroyed all ſpiritual Wickedneſs in high Places!

F. The *Clearer* goes on: *The Apoſtles were under the ſame Miſtake with the reſt of their Countrymen; and expected a temporal Kingdom; and the Sons of* Zebedee *were early Sollicitors to be firſt Miniſters. Our Lord corrects their Error.*

C. Their *Pride*, he ſhould have ſaid; their *Error* remained; for he did not undeceive them, nor correct their Miſtake of the Expectation of the temporal Kingdom of the Meſſiah.

F. He tells them his Kingdom was a different Thing from the Kingdoms of this World. Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles, exerciſe Lordſhip over them.—But ſo it ſhall not be among you; but whoſoever would be great among you, ſhall be your Miniſter, *Mark* x. 42, 43.

C. He tells them too, that thoſe Places which they required, were not his to give, that the other Diſciples might not envy their Grandeur, as through Jealouſy they did; tho' at another Time he ſaid, *All Things are committed to me of my Father*; and elſewhere, *All Power is given unto me in Heaven and in Earth.* And when the Diſciples ſay unto him, *We have forſaken all and followed thee; what ſhall we have therefore? Jeſus ſaid unto them, Verily I ſay unto you, that ye which have followed me in the Regeneration, when the Son of Man ſhall ſit on the Throne of his Glory, ye ſhall ſit upon twelve Thrones, judging the twelve Tribes of Iſrael. And every one that hath forſaken Houſes or Brethren, or Siſters, or Father, or Mother, or Wife, or Children, for my Sake, ſhall receive an hundred Fold, and ſhall inherit everlaſting Life,* Matth. xix. 27, 28, 29. *He ſhall receive an hundred Fold* NOW IN THIS TIME, *Houſes and Brethren, and Siſters and Mothers, and Children and Lands, with Perſecutions* (before theſe Enjoyments) *and in the World to come Life everlaſting,* Mark x. 30. *He ſhall receive manifold more* IN THIS PRESENT TIME, ſays St, *Luke* xviii. 30. *and in the World to come Life everlaſting.* So that you ſee the Diſciples were promiſed ſome preſent Comforts. His later Miniſters have found theſe preſent Promiſes made good to them, who have never left any Thing for his Sake; how the future will be to them, or how it has been made up in the other World to thoſe that have left their all, and hated their own Lives for Chriſt's Sake in this World, is all behind the Curtain; and dead Men tell no Tales. They that are bleſſed with the preſent Benefits, are ſure of ſomething. Some through Faith depending on the Promiſes of Rewards of an inviſible Inheritance, have ſacrificed their Lives to give his Miniſters Livings. ALL are to be Kings and

and Prieſts in thoſe *Regna Incognita*, without either Subjects or Laymen; therefore hopeful Kingdoms and Livings! This is the Kingdom and Prieſthood of Faith.

F. The *Clearer* inſinuates, that the Jews put Jeſus to the Proof concerning the Tribute-Money, whether he would declare for or againſt the *Roman* Supremacy or his own.

C. True; and what did his Anſwer ſhew more, than that he wiſely evaded both.

F. The Inference the *Clearer* draws from it is, That the Kingdom of God by the Meſſiah was to ſubmit to the Kingdom of *Cæſar*; and therefore not a temporal Kingdom.

C. 'Tis true that this ſpiritual Interpolation has been often injurious to the Kingdom of *Cæſar*. How much happier is *China*, where the Kingdom is not divided between the Fleſh and the Spirit; where they have in the Government no King but *Cæſar!*

F. There is one Paſſage more which the *Clearer* refers to, that *our Lord in a Parable ſhewed the Rulers of the Jews*, Mat. xxi. 43. *That for their wicked and obſtinate Behaviour the Kingdom they expected ſhould be taken from* THEM.

C. This reſpected that Nation or People only, but did not ſet aſide the Meſſiah's expected Kingdom; for when it was taken from *them*, it was to be *given to a Nation or People bringing forth the Fruits thereof.*

F. Nay, but 'tis ſaid in the *Trial*, that *Jeſus fell into Diſgrace with his Countrymen, and ſuffered for oppoſing their Notions of a victorious Meſſiah.*

C. " I believe it cannot be " proved that Jeſus ſuffered for " this Cauſe "

F. Very conciſe, ſays the *Clearer*: *But what Conceit muſt you have of your own Opinion, if you think it ought to paſs without Proof for a ſufficient Anſwer to ſuch Evidence.*

C. Where is the Evidence? By what is it proved? Sure the *Clearer* muſt have a great Conceit of his own Opinion, if he means to paſs that for Evidence. What Prevarication is here, in order to avoid the Proof called for by me; that I doubt of it, will ſcarce be doubted; therefore this needs no Proof on my Side: Nor will any one imagine I offered it, as he inſinuates, for a Proof of the Negative, which was a Call for a Proof of the Affirmative. If the Aſſertions of thoſe that ſay Jeſus ſuffered for the Cauſe of oppoſing the Jew's Notions of a victorious Meſſiah, are the only Proof, I ſay it cannot be proved; and then my Belief that it cannot be proved, is a ſufficient Anſwer to ſuch Evidence.

F. You obſerved before that the Conqueſt the Trial *ſeems to have over Mr.* Woolſton, *was occaſioned by his granting too much, and are determined to avoid this Fault, and to grant nothing* *.

C. If I grant what appears to me unreaſonable, I give up my Reaſon and the Argument, and am left defenceleſs; for Reaſon is my only Guide and Guard.

F. Not your *only* Guard. Gratefully conſider the Lenity and Indulgence of his preſent Majeſty's Government, by which you enjoy this happy Liberty, without which the ſtrongeſt Reaſons in the World could not defend you: A Liberty unknown to Ages paſt; a Free-

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a Freedom to all Lovers and Advocates of Truth, from that Yoke of Perſecution for Religion, *which neither we nor our Fathers were able to bear.*

C. Therefore our King is the *Defender of Truth*; but other Kings have been the *Defenders of Faith*, whether it was Truth or no: For this Reaſon I glory that I live in theſe Days, under ſo benign a Prince and Government, by whom I enjoy this religious Liberty, this divine Favour.

F. Your Adverſary pities you for thus abuſing the King.

C. But how much more is he to be pitied who calls it ſo. This injurious Accuſation offends me more than any Thing he has wrote; becauſe it ſavours of a malevolent Diſpoſition, and an Inquiſition-Spirit. Does he abuſe the King who ſpeaks in his Praiſe without Falſity or Flattery? Or he who calls that juſt Praiſe, Abuſe? Is he guilty of Abuſe, who is free from it even in Thought and Intention? Or he who racks his Wit unjuſtly to accuſe the Innocent? And as for Pity, theſe are to be pited, who attempt, or are obliged to defend what is indefenſible; whoſe Judgments and Conſciences, if they have both, are divided by Spirituals and Temporals, to ſerve God and Mammon. Let them be pitied who think contrary to common Senſe, and act contrary to common Honeſty. Pity him that is in the Houſe of Bondage, not him that is ſenble he is delivered out of it, and thankful for his Deliverance. This is Loyalty, reaſonable Gratitude, and moral Duty. To enjoy common Liberty, and not to be ſenſible of it, is to want common Senſe; to feel the Benefit, and not be thankful for it, nor own it, is Ingratitude. I hope I have expreſſed nothing that may juſtly be eſteemed an Abuſe of this Freedom. The Indulgence of a virtuous Liberty in eſpouſing the Cauſe of uſeful Truth, is the Harmony of Society, the Bleſſing enjoyed under a good Government, which renders a People happy, which calls for the moſt vigorous Conteſt of thoſe who want it, and the moſt thankful Acknowledgment of thoſe who have it. It is the peculiar Glory of his preſent Majeſty's Reign, that Perſecution hides its Head, and that religious Liberty is enjoyed by all his Subjects, and therefore he juſtly deſerves their Loyalty.

F. Mr. *Whiſton* has lately entered into thisDebate concerning the *Reſurrection*; and here is come out Mr. *Jackſon*'s Diſcourſe on the Subject of *Prophecies*, and *Miracles*, in his *Addreſs to the Deiſts*.

C. It would greatly pleaſe me to pay my Reſpects to this worthy Author Mr. *Jackſon*, on that Account; for all others have wretchedly mangled my Arguments on *Miracles*, or ſlubbered them over; but we muſt defer theſe Things, and the reſt of what the *Clearer* and others have ſaid on this Subject, to another Opportunity, if ever we ſhall be ſo happy as to enjoy it. And for what Mr. *Whiſton* has favoured us with, or may further do, I wiſh him Succeſs in his freſh Attempt to oblige the World, by ſettling the Faith. But it is now Time to take Refreſhment and Repoſe. Another Evening it will be a Pleaſure to me to renew our Converſation.

F. And I ſhall long for that Opportunity, which will afford me an equal Satisfaction.

THE

THE SEQUEL OF THE RESURRECTION OF *JESUS* CONSIDERED:

In Answer to the

SEQUEL OF THE Trial of the WITNESSES.

Revised by the Author of, The Resurrection Considered.

Si hoc fieri potuisse dicis, doceas oportet, quomodo, nec fabellas aniles proferas. CICERO de Natura Deorum.

If Christ be not risen, then is our Preaching vain, and your Faith is also vain. 1 Cor. xv. 14.

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THE SEQUEL OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CONSIDERED.

THE SEQUEL OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CONSIDERED, &c.

AS the RESURRECTION OF JESUS CONSIDERED is an irrefutable Anſwer to the TRIAL OF THE WITNESSES OF THE RESURRECTION; ſo THE SEQUEL OF THE TRIAL OF THE WITNESSES, being the very ſame as THE RESURRECTION CLEARED, only a new Title Page: THE RESURRECTION RE-CONSIDERED is the very ſame Anſwer to it that it was before, and as unanſwerable as ever; and will continue to be ſo till the GENERAL RESURRECTION. However, to corroborate this Anſwer, I here produce ſo much, as perhaps may ſafely appear, from THE RESURRECTION DEMONSTRATED TO HAVE NO PROOF: Written by the only Advocate that dared to come forth on my Side, and dared too much; therefore was obliged to drop into Obſcurity. Who that Gentleman of Wit and Learning was, I never could find out. The Work had two Faults, which I muſt ſuppreſs. It contained Expreſſions, 1*ſt*, Too bold: 2*dly*, Too much in my Favour. *Neceſſity* and *Modeſty* will therefore plead for me, in giving my Readers only that Part of it which follows.

HOW do thoſe, that have long been kept in Darkneſs, fear the Day; what Pain it gives them, when it beams upon them. A Bat driven from its Shed, does not know where to go, and aches, till it finds another obſcure Hole to hide its Weakneſs and Deformity; but Eagle-eyes are born to look upwards, and bear, and welcome the direct Rays of the Sun of Reaſon.

I muſt take the CLEARER to Taſk, for calling the Reſurrection a *ſerious* Argument; for 'tis not ſerious, if not true, of however great

great Serioufneſs it would be, if it was true: To prove by Example; if a Man was to tell me I was to be made Emperor of *Peru* and *Mexico*, upon my going to the *Indies*; to be Emperor of *Peru* and *Mexico*, would be prodigious great Fortune to me; but the Nonſenſe and Ridiculouſneſs of the Promiſe would be ſo palpable and apparent, that I ſhould treat it with the utmoſt Contempt and Laughter, and ſhould not go, whatever he could ſay; but even more might that Improbability *in* the Nature of Things arrive, than a Reſurrection, that is *out* of the Nature of Things; whatever *Utopian* Importance and political Uſe it may be of: Therefore, his ſerious Argument is a pitiful begging the Queſtion.

He commends the CONSIDERER of the Reſurrection for two very certain true Aſſertions, in which he does him a Piece of Juſtice; which is to be noted, for 'tis the only one. In my Opinion, ſays the Philoſopher, great Judgment and great Faith are ſuch Contradictions, that they never meet, ſo as to unite in one Perſon.—No; when did they ever unite? In the CLEARER they don't, I am ſure.

The CONSIDERER's other Aſſertion is this: Every real Miracle is an Abſurdity to common Senſe and Underſtanding, and contrary to the Attributes of God. Well; and is it not ſo? Does God convince Men from the Topics of Reaſon, or play with their Senſes? For, *quod extra rationem eſt, non cum ratione eſt*; a Maxim the CLEARER ought to be acquainted with. But why, the CONSIDERER is unqualified for examining, whether a Miracle is real, or no, becauſe a real Miracle does not ariſe from the Attributes of God; only this clear-ſighted Mortal can ſee.

Did the CONSIDERER call the Faith, which the Goſpel propoſes, in Chriſt Jeſus, a divine Hag, with her pious Witchcrafts? He was a naughty Man. But do not you perceive, Mr. CLEARER, with all this holding to the Paſſions, when you have nothing elſe to hold to, that you are perſuading People to believe, as having an Intereſt to believe; and are begging the Queſtion in calling it the Faith of the Goſpel? And you pity him for it; —— canting Hypocriſy *!

The Author of the Trial's Queſtion, how the Story of the Reſurrection came firſt to gain Credit in the World, may be eaſily anſwered, *ſc.* By the Earneſtneſs of the Maintainers. Were half a Dozen Men, ſays *Fontenelle*, to affirm, ſo as to ſeem ſtrongly perſuaded, that the Sun does not make the Day, I do not doubt, they would procure Converts to their Opinion. But to a wonderful Tale, eſpecially, Men give an eaſy Ear; *prodigiis mulcetur hominum genus.* Men believe Stories calculated for Manhood; and the Boy is hung upon his Nurſe's Tongue, when ſhe relates with the Circumſtances of anile Horror, how a Ghoſt was ſeen to walk over the Church-yard: He devours the Words out of her Mouth, nay in

* He pities him, and at the ſame Time endeavours to move the civil Power againſt him.

in her Mouth, and feels a Fear not barren of Delight. But, what if there is an Intereſt wove into it; as, you ſhall be this, and you ſhall be that, if you believe; look ye, without knowing why, nor wherefore; for happy are thoſe who believe, and do not ſee. When all this is laid together, with the cunning Addition of, this is all you have to do! if you do riſe again, you are to ſtand upon this Ground, and, if you do not, *Cave verearis, ne mortui illi philoſophi tibi irrideant:* When theſe Influences are united, whatever of Nature would ſtand out, is preſſed into the Service, and we are willing Dupes, and give up our Hands to every Abſurdity. Then there is the Charm of Novelty; a Beauty, that ſtrikes the firſt Sight, as Cuſtom wins upon you, by long Converſation. Both of them operate ſtrongly: And upon whom did the former operate? Was it not upon the ſtupid, childiſh Nation of the Jews, that was always flinging away its Rattles, after it had uſed them a Day; that To-day would have a Calf, and To-morrow Jehovah; whoſe Succeſſor was a Calf again. Was it a Wonder any Thing ſtruck theſe People, that was carried on with any ſlight Appearance? And all of them it did not ſtrike, as we ſee very plainly; hardly any but *Babes* *. And no Man upon Earth can be ſo abſurd, as to imagine, they had Teſtimony of his being the Son of God, believed him ſo to be, and oppoſed him, or endeavoured it; or could think it ſignificant. What if a Man was to form a Judgment of this knowing Age, from *Whiteſield*'s Mob, and the Credit he gains among us; many Peltings that righteous Perſon has ſtood from Huſbands, furious for the Elopement of their Wives, but never has been knocked down; O, the *rare* Hand of *Providence!* Was any Man, I ſay, to weigh us all in the Scale of *Whiteſield*'s Mob, we ſhould complain heavily of the Uſage, and ſay much the ſame Things, which the *Phariſees*, were they in Being, would ſay: But if a Miracle-monger was to ſet up, I wonder how he would ſtand the Shrift of theſe Days. There are Reaſons enough for the Story of the Reſurrection's being credited *then*; but what can be a Reaſon for its being believed by an Age that would then have ſeen through it, and only have it upon Truſt from the Parties themſelves, who make their own Story good, or it is ſtrange; who even do not that, and were the Scum of a Nation, that was the Contempt and Blot of the whole Earth. But pleaſing Wonderfulneſs, Uncommonneſs, might win Applauſe to it, from a gaping and ignorant Mob: Novelty made it take with ſome; Example inſinuated it into others; and ſince, Cuſtom has faſtened it upon thoſe that believe it, and do not reaſon upon it. And is it not ſtrange, that an Incident, which was to be the Foundation of a Faith, that was to prevail with Jew and Gentile, ſhould be ſo *huddled* over, as to convince neither

* *In Underſtanding*, for *Jeſus* himſelf owned, that the *Wiſe* and *Prudent* ſaw not the Goſpel Light; and piouſly thanked God for it. *Luke* x. 21.

neither Jew nor Gentile? I mean the Majority.

The Chriſtian Religion leaves both Jews and Gentiles in the Dark, and being of a reſtleſs Nature, that it muſt be in Motion, and not able to go forwards, it even contents itſelf, and goes backwards: It always was of this pacific Diſpoſition *without* a *Sword*, and its Revilers may ſay what they will; but when it has no Power, it is guilty of as few Acts of Violence, as any RELIGION, I would have them to know, upon the Face of the Earth. *Nefarii homines hæc audiant.* Mahometaniſm has gained Ground of the Chriſtian Religion conſiderably; and how finely this *Light lightens* the World, which not a hundredth Part of the World ſees, and ten to one of thoſe, who do ſee, refute, ridicule, and laugh at; if it is a Light, it is the Dark-lanthorn Light of the Quakers; which is all within itſelf, or communicated to a little Circle of Whiners and Mumpers only. And whatever *Virtues* it has beſides, it has a moſt *damning Virtue*, I am ſure, if all are to be curſed, that do not believe it. Is it uſeleſs to Mankind; and why the unneceſſary Pains of bringing it down? Uſeful; and why is it not better implanted? If the Religion came from God, would he not take Care to eſtabliſh it, but leave it at the Will of the Lords of the Earth to fondle or deſtroy it, by many unacknowledged, by more unknown? Won't you ſay, that at this Rate, Chriſt might as well have laid quiet in his Grave, and given his Wounds Time to *heal*.

There is another Aſſertion, which why the CONSIDERER omits, or the CLEARER inſults upon, I cannot ſee: Believing Truth, the CONSIDERER had ſaid, 'for Company's Sake, is no more meritorious than believing Error. And 'tis Self-evident it is not. The Merit lies ſolely in the Motive; in the rational Conviction; but he, that believes a Thing is ſo, becauſe other People believe it to be ſo, has been no more rationally convinced, than he that believes the Contrary for the ſame No-reaſon; therefore the Merit is abſolutely equal, or rather none at all on either Side. He, that believes the Sun moves round the Earth, with that Ignorant of Nature, *Moſes*; and he, that believes the Earth moves round the Sun, with that Unfolder of Nature, *Newton*, only becauſe *Moſes* or *Newton* believes ſo, are juſt upon the ſame Footing; foraſmuch as neither have uſed the Method of Demonſtration neceſſary to bring to a Concluſion; Reaſon does not undeceive the one, nor confirm the other; the one does not believe againſt Conviction, nor the other with Conviction: In ſhort, they neither of them know any Thing of the Matter, and their Merits are quite the ſame. That the Merits conſiſt in the Motive of the Action, and not in the Action, is ſo commonly known, and ſaid, that one would have thought it might have reached even the CLEARER's Ears; and what he means by trifling ſo himſelf, or making other People trifle ſo, I cannot tell.

And now am I aſhamed of his poor, boyiſh Dealing, and catching, like a ſinking Man, to every Twig: The CONSIDERER ſays, 'tis argued, the Apoſtles were ſincere

cere, therefore what they reported was true. But he does not, as the CLEARER owns, charge the Author of the Trial with arguing ſo: And therefore, what does it ſignify? To be ſure, one Quality is not predicable of another Quality; a Man's Sincerity, which is one, makes no Implication of his Underſtanding, which is another: That the one is clear, does not at all induce that the other is not impoſed upon.

'Tis ſilly to argue, that if Miracles are preſerved, (in Memorials) would not repeating them in ſucceeding Ages be unneceſſary? For Miracles cannot be preſerved; they are like a Glaſs of Spirits, thrown upon Fire; which gives a Flaſh then, but loſt for ever after. He that is told of Miracles, knows, nor ſees nothing of them; but is drove, at beſt, to believe a Reporter; who might be blinded by Intereſt, if he was not depraved by Roguery; and Men have, or make themſelves an Intereſt in continuing in an abſurd Party, they have choſen, and die, frequently, rather than renounce it; as *Indians*, and People of all Religions have done. And one dying for Fame-ſake, which carries beyond the Grave its enchanting Influence, (and made *Curtius* ride into the Chaſm to be praiſed, though to live no more,) piques others to follow him: Shall we, ſay they, ſuffer leſs couragiouſly than he has done, and ſhew ourſelves daſtard Temporizers? They die too: And we have Plenty of Martyrs, if that is to prove the Thing is true; which does not even prove, they believe it to be ſo; for Men may die for a Lie, rather than own it. It is with Difficulty we prevail upon ourſelves to acknowledge a Shame, we are conſcious of. Dying proves nothing, but that a Man is ſincere, and a Fool; or otherwiſe moved, and a Rogue. Even *a little Hope, a little Praiſe* may catch ſome Minds, and be a Motive ſufficient. I repeat, that a Man, who believes a Report of a Miracle, believes a Man, and not a Miracle; which he has not ſeen: And if it ſignified a Farthing who had it, why ſhould not this Age have the ſame Evidence as another; as it has juſt the ſame Intereſt to be ſaved, and Souls every whit as precious?

The Inſtance the CLEARER brings afterwards of Miſ-Quotation of the Trial, is very inconſiderable; ſince, if the Paſſage quoted is not the Author of the Trial's Sentiment, nor ſtarted by him, it is plain, he admits it. I refer to the Book: It is impoſſible to have Leiſure to be minute with ſo trifling a Writer. But what does he mean by ſaying, Believers are not to wait for the Evidence of Prophecy, 'till *Infidels* will ſee it. What are they? What are *Believers?* They muſt have more *Folly:* I am ſure, they have not more *Intereſt* than Infidels, to believe, and find, all is true; and I do not imagine there is an Unbeliever in the Land that would not give all he has, and die without Heſitation, to re-animate, and enter upon a Heaven: But what ſignifies that? That won't make him ſwallow down all the wild Lies of Biographers, and give Credit to unſupported Improbabilities. He is too wiſe to let his Paſſions flatter him, and a ſenſeleſs Chimera of Inter-

eſt deceive him. He oppoſes *Reaſon* to a *Deluſion*, gilded with Intereſt; and *ETERNAL TRUTH* to the *variable Doctrines of Religion*.

As to what the CONSIDERER has urged, and miſ-quoted about Prophefy, the CLEARER ſees, and acknowledges, it is not material to the Queſtion; and all, that can be ſaid upon it, is, that the CONSIDERER has expoſed himſelf more than he need to have done, and gone out of the irrefutable Strength of his Argument.

The Fear, that acted the High-Prieſts, was the moſt rational Fear in the World; and I know not of any Thing prepoſterous, but the Author of the Trial's Inference, that therefore they were convinced of the Truth of the Miracles. That a *Deceiver* ſhould work real Miracles, they were not afraid; (for ſo they eſteemed him) that would have been nonſenſical, prepoſterous, and all you can ſay of it; and a real Reſurrection, if they were afraid of, they could not prevent. What did they apprehend then? And what could they prevent? A *ſhammed* one. Now, they knew, if this was cleanly done, all was over with them; they might ſhut up the Doors of their Synagogues: The whole World would go after the Apoſtles, and deſert them; the Torrent would overwhelm them then; it would be in vain to think of ſtopping it. And if the Scene was acted in the preſent Days, I would fain know, if our Prieſts would not carry themſelves in the ſame Manner. If any one, in the Perſon of a *Whitefield*, or any other Body of equal Sanctity, was to take away the Church-mob; which I eſtimate by Underſtanding, and not by Fortune, and leave the Parſons to preach by themſelves; and the Seats to pay themſelves; if he was to ſpeak up for Virtue and Religion, naked and miſerable, unrewarded, unveſted with comfortable Biſhopricks and Deaneries, getting himſelf only a few charitable Pence; if, in Confirmation of this moſt unorthodox Doctrine, a Man was to do ſeeming Miracles in this Age, which is not given to gape for them, but more given to detect them; but if he was to do a Miracle, that was not to be prevaricated; if he was to make a Church jump two or three Miles in the Air, and come down ſafe, Wind and Limb; I-faith, the high and the low Prieſts might cry their Throats out; all the World would leave them, and follow this inconteſtable Miracle-worker. But, to go on with the Caſe I was putting; if he was to keep playing out of Sight; and, when they aſked him for a Miracle, tell them, they *tempted* him; how would they tear and rave; how many Cheats they would call him; they would tell him, they believed they tempted him; that he would give his Ears to do it, if he could. Phooh, phooh, cries my Man, *an adulterous Generation aſks for a Sign*. And what but an adulterous Generation needs it, would they reply with Vivacity: If we are holden with our Sins, and you have the Power of calling us to Virtue, and looſing us, by granting our reaſonable Demand, why do not you do it? Remember your Maxim; *The Sick need a Phyſician*. We are the Sick; pray cure us.

Why

Why ſhould we be damned, who are ready to be convinced, if you give us the leaſt Reaſon ſo to be: Make our Senſes Judges, as well as you have made other People's? Don't be partial; and we will believe you. Here is a Requeſt not to be denied: And I need not tell you what this Man would be ſet down for, if he would not perform before capable Judges, that could not be impoſed upon. And don't think to put us off with that old ſtale Demand; Are you to preſcribe to God? Yes; the moſt reaſonable Way he would take, or he is no reaſonable Being. I only ſay, in this Caſe, our Parſons would be as very High-Prieſts as ever were in the World. For I know the Men; without a Living they cannot live.

A ſtrong Prepoſſeſſion of Faith, is a neceſſary Ingredient in the Compoſition of a Wonder-witneſs, the want of which would ſpoil all the Miracles in the World. But if Unbelievers were not the Sick that needed a Phyſician, who were? The Believers ſure had no Occaſion for one: They were in good Condition enough; for *by Faith we ſhall be ſaved.* However, ſick they (the Unbelievers) might be, and be damned, if they would, they were ſure not to be cured. Says *Matthew*, He did not *many* mighty Works in ſuch a Place, becauſe of their Unbelief. But, δυνάμεις πολλὰς, many Miracles, is the beſt: He did ſome Miracles, but not enough to do any Good: They needed a Phyſician; and therefore they were not to have one. You cannot find an Inſtance of a juſter Behaviour.

The CONSIDERER, ſays the CLEARER, treats the Writers of the *New Teſtament* as Impoſtors and Cheats, and void even of Cunning to tell their own Story plauſibly. Let the Caſe be weighed, and Judgment given. Allowing Negligence, I mean the common Omiſſion of trifling Circumſtances, is therefore failing to mention the moſt important Incidents excuſable, in Compoſers, who had the Matter at Heart, and not ſo much to carry in their Heads, only one poor Life to write, a Kind of Penny Hiſtory? Is it to be accounted for, that you find ſome Decency, though a Wildneſs in the Expreſſions of the three firſt, but that the Fourth and the Laſt ſhould come, and with one Bound overleap all Bounds; ſhould ſwagger, and ſay, Odd, if I was to write you all, it would be more than you could read, I can aſſure you: Nay, it would be more than your whole World would hold.

Above the Stars exalt your Stile;
You yet are low ten thouſand Mile.

If *John* was deſired to write the Story, he did it to ſome Purpoſe, and thwacks the Concluſion with ample Proviſion for all, whom the ſame Solicitations ſhould prevail upon to be Story-tellers after him.

Before the CLEARER comes, as he ſays, to the Points, which more immediately affect the Evidence of the Reſurrection, he takes Notice of a Remark of the CONSIDERER, That that which is the Foundation of any, much leſs of every falſe Religion, cannot be the Foundation of the true. Not the proper Foundation to be ſure; for Truth and Falſhood, would then change Sides, be undiſtinguiſhable, nay, the ſame; and *Peter*

and *Paul*, working Miracles in Support of their oppoſite Parts of the Queſtion, would prove their oppoſite Parts both true; Error would be Truth, and Truth in its Turn Error: *Peter* would work a Miracle, and *Paul* would be in an egregious Miſtake; *Paul* would take up the Ball, and the Miſtake would be turned upon *Peter*: *Peter* would go again to his Miracle Gift, and *Paul* would not have one Word of Truth on his Side; *Paul* would come round *Peter* a ſecond Time with an All-fair, and Faith *Peter* would lie like the Devil; and ſo on, as long as you pleaſed. And here is a fine Proof for any Side, that is, a Proof for every Side, that is, a Proof for no Side: The CLEARER knows of a Maxim in the Schools, *Quod nimis probat, nihil probat:* Miracles then prove nothing at all. How plain is this; and how dark is this CLEARER's Sight; Miracles would be nothing, if we had them: But it is ſcandalouſly fooliſh to take them upon Truſt, and the Credit of a Hiſtory; and when we ſee Nature operating conſtantly and undiſturbedly, to think her Operations were diſturbed juſt then, becauſe ſuch a Story tells ſo: That a Man ſhould impoſe, or be impoſed upon, is *in* the Nature of Things; but that thoſe Events ſhould happen, is *out* of the Nature of Things, which we daily Experience; and the believing a Thing of common Contingency, is preferable ſurely to believing a Thing never competent to Nature. Revelation and Miracles, which are here, and there, and every where, and, 'tis likely, no where, and every Religion claims by, are the Characteriſtic of none, and prove Falſhood as well as Truth, which cannot be; therefore they do not prove at all. A clear Deduction of Reaſon is the only Revelation from Heaven; and God, a rational Being, orders every Thing in the Courſe of Reaſon; and a Pretence of any Thing elſe is true Impiety.

Every idle Tale will diſturb him, who has not philoſophized himſelf into the Calm of Reaſon, Τὰς δόξας ξελαύνων, ἀφ ὧν πλεῖ-ϛος τὰς ψυχας καταλαμϐ άνει θόρυϐος: They, that affirm it, they ſee Apparitions, are Crack-brained People, ſilly Women, or ignorant Men, where the Imagination runs away with the Judgment; but they that believe their Story are a Kind of ſecond-hand Fools below them, that there is no Name for. Reaſon emancipates the Mind from ſimple Credulity, and vain Fears; a ſtrong invariable Light, that ſhines upon Truth, and detects Error, by the Exertion of which only we can be different from Brutes, acting they don't know why, and even follow the Advice of an Apoſtle, to prove all Things, and hold faſt that which is beſt.

The CLEARER begins the Points which more directly affect the Reſurrection with a detached Sentence of the CONSIDERER's, *viz. If the Reſurrection be a Fraud, Evidence forged, what Books have we to prove it ſo?* Which, in the Archneſs of his Imagination, he thinks is a mighty Matter for the Reſurrection; but, I conceive, nothing can be more againſt it: For what does it ſhew, but that the Story was like the Tale of a Ghoſt, no Body troubled their Heads

Heads to contradict it; to thoſe, who made uſe of their Reaſon, it carried Refutation along with it; and to thoſe, who did not, the Application of Reaſon was very vain.

The CLEARER puts a very unparallel Caſe: If the CONSIDERER was to take it in his Head to prove, *Cæſar* was not killed in the Senate-Houſe, all the Evidence would be againſt him; but, while Evidence reports natural Things, while it urges only what is probable, does any one take it in his Head to contradict it? But does not the vouching Improbabilities invalidate Evidence? If all the Evidence had ſaid, as unanſwered as you will, that after *Cæſar* was dead to a Demonſtration, he roſe and walked; would they have been regarded? Do not we do ſo in the Caſe of *Cæſar?* Do not we diſtinguiſh between what is reported of probable, and what of improbable in this Story? Don't we give our Aſſent to the one, and refuſe it to the other? When *Plutarch* tells us, *Cæſar* died by the Wounds of the Senators, we believe him: There is nothing in the Story, which contradicts Probability; and the Report of a Perſon not apparently intereſted, joined with Probability, is to be believed: But when he talks of Apparitions, (mind the unwary Inſtance) taking a Walk upon that Occaſion, without any viſible Buſineſs, we ſay, with a diſſenting Smile, *the Writer had a little Love for the Marvellous.* Witneſſes deſtroy their own Evidence, that report Improbabilities: And ſaying an Hiſtorian is ſacred, is nothing at all; that's taking a Thing for granted again, and *abſurdum per abſurdius.*

How willing is the CLEARER to tack in his Learning about the Ages of *Celſus* and *Porphyry*, when he obliges the CONSIDERER, ſo unneceſſarily for the Senſe of the Words, to ſay, There were Fragments of *Porphyry* in *Origen.* The Words of the CONSIDERER do no more than import, There were Books written againſt Chriſtianity: *Celſus* and *Porphyry*'s, for Inſtance; Fragments of ſome of which (plainly referable to either of the Antecedents) are to be found in *Origen.* It is true, but he with a Candour, or Wiſdom truly eccleſiaſtic, fixes theſe Words to the Fragments of *Porphyry*; and triumphs upon this: I am aſhamed of him.

The CLEARER ſhuts his Eyes wilfully, to the Difference between poſſible Facts, and Abſurdities refuting themſelves: And he aſks, if the Credit of any Hiſtory is the worſe, becauſe it is wantonly contradicted? No; but it is much worſe, and evidently deſtroyed, by relating Things that contradict continual Experience, and common Senſe; then it bears the ſtrongeſt Teſtimony againſt itſelf, and needs no other to ſubvert its Authority. Incidents that are untrue, but contingent to Nature, muſt be ſhewn to be *ſo* untrue, by a Medium, by Grounds evictive of their Falſity; but a Hiſtory of Miracles is a Hiſtory of palpable Extravagance. If *Livy* is miſtaken, in telling, how *Decius Mus* dreamed, he ſaw a large Figure of a Man, larger than Men are, and of an Appearance auguſter than human, and that in the Sacrifice the Head of the Liver was cut;

upon the Information of which, he devoted himſelf for the People of *Rome*, and died precipitated among the thickeſt of his Enemies; we will believe all this that he ſays, becauſe it might all very poſſibly happen; the firſt might be the Wildneſs of the Brain, the ſecond a Slip of the Prieſt's Knife, and the third the Patriotiſm of a *Roman*; at leaſt, 'till contrary Evidence comes, we will believe it: But, when he relates, that *Caſtor* and *Pollux* fought the *Roman* Battle a long Time after they had ceaſed to live, we don't wait for contrary Evidence; we give him the Lye from our own Experience of Things; becauſe 'tis a little out of Nature for Men (for all they are *reputed* to be Gods) to pop up, either fighting, or praying, after their Death; they act thoſe ridiculous Parts enough while they are alive, and Nature is tired of the Comedy: How do the beſt Hiſtorians; *Livy*, lye, when they ſpeak of *Religion*, as if it made a Man lye whether he would or no. My Lord *Clarendon*, that is a credible Hiſtorian, we do not believe, when he tells the Story of an *Apparition*: It's an unneceſſary Trouble to refute a Thing, that brings its own Refutation. But you will ſay, though the Impoſſibility appeared, the Story was believed. Well, and after all the Arguing in the World, the Impoſſibility could but appear; and if that was not a Reaſon for the Story's being diſbelieved, it would ſtill be believed. Arguing could make the Caſe no clearer, and was to no Purpoſe. But that is a glaringly fooliſh Hiſtory, whoſe Credit is overthrown by its own Relations. The Reaſon, no Diſcourſe was thought fit to be directed againſt it, was this; and *Celſus* took the beſt Way to expoſe it, by ſhewing, it was as inconſiſtent with itſelf, as with Reaſon. Can it be ſuppoſed, ſays the CLEARER, that *Celſus* would have admitted the Miracles of Chriſt, as real Facts, had he not been compelled to it by the univerſal Conſent of all Men in the Age he lived? Yes, he would, to make it appear, that upon the utmoſt Stretch of Romance and Abſurdity, upon that's being admitted, the End propoſed would not be attained; that Power, extended as far as you can fable, is no Sort of Preſumption of Wiſdom, another Attribute; that Strength does not imply Wit, nor Beauty, Valour; and that therefore it was impertinent to the Queſtion, if the Chriſtian Religion came from God, a reaſonable Being, to urge Miracles in Proof of the Affirmative, which do not prove Reaſon, but an Attribute diſtinct from it. Miracles go for no more than they are; they are Marks of Power, and they prove nothing elſe.

Celſus, ſays the CLEARER, is preſerved, and *Origen*'s Anſwer is not a general Reply to *Celſus*, but a minute Examination of all his Objections, even of thoſe, which appeared to *Origen* moſt frivolous: But who knows, if he did not chuſe the moſt frivolous, and how well he fulfilled his Friend's Requeſt? I don't doubt, *Celſus* had ſtronger, which have periſhed with him: I don't doubt it, I ſay, from the Age he lived in, his confeſſed great Abilities, and his

Zeal

Zeal for Truth. The Work of an Antagoniſt is not uſually the moſt ſafe and advantageous Repoſitory of an Author; it may preſerve him, but, like clouded Amber, it obſcures him at the ſame Time: That a Man is ſafe in his Enemy's Hands, only this Perſon of clear Sight can ſee. The CONSIDERER would be VASTLY ſafe, if Time (his Eyes put out by Fortune) was to mow down his Writing, and Poſterity was to read him, as he is repreſented by the CLEARER, criticiſed, uncomprehended; and refuted, unanſwered; the ſtrong Arguments totally paſſed by, or ſlubbered over with the greateſt Haſte and Inaccuracy; trivial Remarks upon a few Miſ-quotations, and Expreſſions ridiculouſly wreſted to a Senſe, which the Context makes them incapable of: As we need go no further than the next Leaf for an Inſtance of. Can it be expected, ſays the CONSIDERER, that an equitable Iſſue ſhould be obtained from what may be fairly reaſoned out of their own (the Evangeliſts) Report? The CLEARER queries, Did he propoſe to reaſon Something out of it unfairly? But, in God's Name, why ſo witty? The CONSIDERER's Words are, Can it be expected, it ſhould be obtained; not, can it be obtained; he ſhews it can be; but, is it not, would he ſay, a little too ſanguine to hope it; to expect to find ſuch unwary Hiſtorians, that had but one Point to keep in View, the little complex Life of Jeſus, as to manage their Matters ſo ill, that inſtead of corroborating, they ſhould unwittingly invalidate one another's Teſtimony, and tell *different* Stories; which, let me inform the CLEARER, is not *contrary* Stories, for all he does not ſee the Difference; and charges the CONSIDERER with the Product of his own puzzled Head. A Story that has more or fewer Circumſtances than another Story of a Thing, is a *different* Story; but a *contrary* Story, is a Story compoſed of quite oppoſite Circumſtances, incompatible with one another; it is a Genius, which contains different, a Species; a Story that contradicts, muſt differ; but a Story that differs, need not contradict. The CONSIDERER's Logic is juſt, and the CLEARER's Underſtanding very bad. The Evangeliſts did not ſee the Conſequences of telling *different* Stories, but *contrary* Stories; and their Conſequences were too plain to be overlooked by THEM. They knew Black was not White, and that if they had affirmed them both the ſame Thing, the World would have ſaid upon it immediately, that they gave one another the Lye; but they did not attend to what would follow from one of them's predicating of a Thing, that it was Black, and White in Part; and another, that it was White; or one, that it was White, and another, that it was Black, and White in Part; which is more or leſs Circumſtances, or telling different Stories. The CONSIDERER ſays, Can it be EXPECTED an equitable Iſſue ſhould be obtained? But he makes it appear, it CAN be obtained; and the more beyond our Expectation, the more welcome its Conviction.

Can that, ſays the CONSIDERER, be eſteemed a fair Trial,

where the Evidences are only on one Side of the Queſtion? Was full and clear Evidence ever rejected, queries the CLEARER, becauſe there was no Evidence to be produced againſt it? Very clear Evidence, truly;------and that's fine Evidence that pretends to vouch an Abſurdity. What would ten or a hundred Men ſignify bearing Witneſs, of a Loaf in a Baker's Shop, ſwelling to ſuch a Bigneſs, that the Houſe could not contain it? Eſpecially, if it appeared too, they got the Mob to liſten to their Story, or ſold the FULL and TRUE Account of it; or any Way gratified their Vanity, or their Intereſt? Common Senſe is enough to deſtroy all the Evidence in the World of a Thing, that is againſt it. That the Miracles, their Fame, went through *Judea*, you may believe them. Whatever *Whitefield* was to do, would go through *England*; and if he was to open any Body's Eyes, as miraculouſly as Jeſus did, we ſhould hear enough of it, I make no Queſtion; but, for all that, our High-Prieſts would not believe it, unleſs they ſaw it; and their Biſhopricks might poſſibly harden their Hearts THEN. Miracles have ceaſed; what, are People given over? But Faith has ceaſed, and you know Miracles could never be worked without it. The Witneſſes of the Coronation of *Henry* VIII. urges the CLEARER, *very pertinently*, are all of a Side; would you call it into Queſtion upon that? But that's a poor Parſon's Cunning of putting a Thing *in* Nature, in the Place of a Thing *out* of Nature, and repreſenting them upon the ſame Footing: But, when he was a comparing it, why did not he compare it to *Gertrix*, the *Iriſh* Miracle-worker, no Body concerned himſelf to refute his Wonders? The Evidence is all of a Side; and all for them; and yet no Body believes them.

The CLEARER aſks, how you know the Witneſſes of the Reſurrection are partial? Let him aſk Mr. *Whitefield*, if charitable Collections, and common Purſe-Money, are not very good Things? If that HOLY, HOLY, HOLY Chriſtian, ſhould be at a Stand, ſtill he himſelf will know, whether he does not toaſt himſelf with great Pleaſure over a Fire lit by the Folly of the People; broach his Wine, and laugh at the Gulls. We ſhall know theſe Things from our Knowledge of human Nature.

With as much Wiſdom the CLEARER enquires, why the Witneſſes are called combined? Is not it his (the CONSIDERER's) Drift, ſays he, to ſhew, they contradict one another? But where is the Contradiction of that? Are not Witneſſes often combined to maintain a Cauſe, and yet ſound their Notes ſo ill together, that they detect and refute one another, and ſhew what a Parcel of Fools they all are? He did not mean, and the Word does not enforce, they were aſſociated with Skill and Judgment; he ſuppoſes they combined in mutual, tho' ill-judged Endeavours; but, if preferring the Goad of Death to the Rack of Shame, which muſt have aroſe from the Confeſſion of Fraudulency, and Cowardice;

and

and to a ſorry, contemptible Life; if dying for the Vanity of Religion is a Proof of it, the Crocodile of *Nile*, will come in for his Share with the Lord of Hoſts. As both the CONSIDERER and the CLEARER are rightly of Opinion, that the Nature of Chriſt's Kingdom is of no Concern to the preſent Queſtion, I ſhall ſay but this of it: It is plain, that Jeſus encouraged the Notion of his being *King of the Jews* in the Senſe of the Jews, while he could think of acting that moſt difficult Part of the Character of *Meſſiah* (for he adapted himſelf to the Prophecy,) with the leaſt Probability of Succeſs; and never relinquiſhed that; 'till all Hopes relinquiſhed him.

What a Compliment he unawares makes them upon the Queſtion's being put to him, why he ſtill kept the worſt Company, and aſſociated himſelf with Publicans and Sinners, the loweſt and meaneſt of the People? *The Whole*, ſays he, *need not a Phyſician, but thoſe that are ſick*; but who ſo ſick, as thoſe who did not believe a Thing he did, nor a Word he ſaid? And whoſe Hearts were to be ſo divinely hardened, that they were to work the Death of this judicious Orator?

The Author of the Trial thinks, the Jews ſaw ſome Reaſon to doubt, the Miracles of Jeſus were true, or they would not have regarded his Prophecy of a Reſurrection: But they might diſbelieve the Miracles; and though they did not fear a true Reſurrection, they could not be void of the Apprehenſion of a falſe one. They took Meaſures to prevent that; not a real one; which they never could think to diſappoint. How plain is it, that the Phariſees ſpoke their Sentiments, in ſaying, *We remember, that Deceiver ſaid*——they wanted nothing elſe but to yield to a Miracle fairly, and truly done. They always came to him with the Demand of a Sign, the Conviction other People had; and he always put it off with, *A wicked Generation ſeeks after a Sign; but no Sign ſhall be given them.* They treated him conſequently with the greateſt Indignation and Contempt; and it would be the Caſe, if it was to be acted over and over never ſo often in the World: It is the moſt evident Thing upon Earth.

When the chief Prieſts made their Speech to *Pilate*, he did not miſunderſtand them at all; and had more Senſe than to aſk them, if they thought him a Deceiver, why they guarded againſt him; but that very Speech informed him, they did not apprehend a Reſurrection in good Earneſt, but ſome Practiſing about one; and in that Caſe they feared, the laſt Error of the People in imagining a Reſurrection of Jeſus, would be of a worſe Conſequence than the firſt had been, in imagining a Reſurrection of *Lazarus*. And this was highly agreeable, nay, conſequent to their thinking him a *Deceiver*; and their Requeſt upon thoſe Fears for a Guard, was too reaſonable to be denied; but that they were not at the Sepulchre, to ſee how he fulfilled his Word, is an infallible Sign Things were hurried over, before they expected: But the Seal was broke; needs there any more?

Why

Why did not the Body go out, and leave the Seal whole, as it paſſed thro' the Door, to make a real Miracle of it? Why were not the Sick cured of this Diſeaſe of Infidelity? Let the Parſons anſwer.

The CLEARER urges in Diſproof of an Aſſertion of the CONSIDERER's, *that the Jews* (meaning the Chief, or thoſe that adhered to Judaiſm) *did not believe, Jeſus performed any Wonders in his Life*, which, according to him, he lays down againſt the united Authority of all the Evangeliſts; Mighty Authority; Men, that you don't know: In Diſproof of this he urges *Matthew*'s Puff, *that Jeſus healed all manner of Diſeaſes among the People, and that his Fame went through all Syria* —— *and that there followed him great Multitudes of People from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jeruſalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan:* For which you have the Word of that veracious Biographer.

Were the Chief Prieſts, demands the CLEARER, the only Perſons unacquainted with them? Unacquainted with them! No; they were acquainted with them, to be ſure; they heard the Shouts, which would never have moved them with Indignation, nor Concern, if they had not ſeen the Effect it had on the People: Why their Anger to him otherwiſe? *They took Counſel againſt him, how they might deſtroy him*; which they would have had no Thought, nor Pretence for, nor Imagination of effecting, if they had been perſuaded of the Reality of his Miracles; but themſelves, it appears plainly, have gone over to him, and been the moſt ſervent of his Followers. But nothing is more probable, than that when they were deafned with the Noiſe of his Miracles, they aſcribed them to the Devil, when Men are told a Feat they cannot account for: *Never tell us*, ſay they; *he could not do this without the Help of the Devil.* This is common, when People are plagued with an abſurd Thing; which to diſprove, as 'tis negative, is hard; and the beſt Diſproof of it, is its Contradiction to Nature, common Senſe, and the orderly Courſe of Things, which, whatever Whims Men take into their Heads, is ſeen to be invariable. If the Words aſcribing the Miracles to the Devil dropped from the Mouths of the High Prieſts, it was in this Way; but *Matthew* gave us what Repreſentation of them he pleaſed, in his Hiſtory. *In the very Temple itſelf, the Blind and the Lame came to him, and he healed them.* Look ye, the Temple was a wide Place; it was in ſome Corner of it, to be ſure; had the Phariſees ſeen, it might have converted them. It follows; *When the High Prieſts ſaw the wonderful Things that Jeſus did*, &c. How could that be; for they deſired to ſee, and were always denied their Requeſt. We have not even the Grounds, which the Phariſees had; what do we believe for? Well, *when they ſaw theſe Things, they were diſpleaſed:* But why diſpleaſed? Becauſe Jeſus worked real Miracles; impoſſible to have been diſpleaſed at that; it would have been the Foundation of ſomething quite different from Diſpleaſure. The very Enquiry about

bout the Man that was ſaid to be born blind, and ejecting him, manifeſted their Diſbelief of it: Had they acknowledged any Miracles to be done by him; they would have admitted this without Difficulty.

It is moſt undoubted, the Chief Prieſts were alarmed at the Progreſs Jeſus made with the People, and would have taken away his Life, ſince he avoided to give them an Occaſion to detect him, and ſo fruſtrate him. As in his evaſive Anſwer to their Queſtion, *Is it lawful to give tribute to* Cæſar, *or not?* Had he anſwered it categorically, in one Caſe they would have been at Eaſe; in the other, they muſt have taken Meaſures againſt him, for their own and the public Safety. The Truth of the Miracles would have operated upon them differently, and made them his Followers, not his Perſecutors. This is plain enough to need nothing to be ſaid of it. But when they had gained ſo eaſy a Maſtery over him, the Chief Prieſt addreſſed a Queſtion to him in the Spirit of Railery, the Height of which lies in a well obſerved Solemnity: *I adjure thee, by the living God,* ſaid they with a covered Sneer, *that thou tell us, whether thou be the Chriſt, the Son of God?* Jeſus ſaw the extreme Game he made of him, and anſwered to it accordingly. Otherwiſe there is no Senſe in his Reply, *Thou haſt ſaid,* or thou haſt jeered, he anſwered; *nevertheleſs,* (that is, for all thy Jeer) *thou ſhalt ſee the Son of Man ſitting on the Right-hand of Power, and coming in the Clouds of Heaven*; ſtill encouraging them to believe he ſhould be victorious one of thoſe Days. But they went on ſneering him, after they had ſtruck him, ſaying, *Propheſy unto us, who it is, that ſmote thee.* The Queſtion was not put ſeriouſly, but *temptingly,* according to the old Way of tempting him to difficult Matters. It was Railery, though the Evangeliſt was not of a Pitch to underſtand it; a Jeſt, that is not hid, but at firſt ſeen through, is not Railery; but may be diſtinguiſhed by the Name of Banter. *To Barabbas would he have uſed this Queſtion?* The CLEARER aſks. Wiſe truly: To be ſure, he would not; becauſe upon *Barabbas* the Railery would not have ſtruck; it could not be applied, but to one that pretended to the Character of Meſſiah; and here, I think, are abundant Marks to ſhew, he did not at all apprehend Jeſus was the Meſſiah, but took him for a *Deceiver.*

The Chief Prieſts ſaid of Jeſus, when he was hanging upon the Croſs, *He ſaved others, himſelf he cannot ſave. He ſaved others,* the CLEARER repeats with a Buſtle, *what do they mean, he never wrought any Miracles*; *as the* CONSIDERER *ſuppoſes? Quite otherwiſe.* But he is quite out. It was with the greateſt and keeneſt Mockery they ſaid, *he ſaved others,* reproaching him for having pretended to ſave others, and at the ſame Time the People indirectly, for having ever believed him, when it was viſible now to them, that he hung upon the Croſs, unable to help himſelf, or any other Body. This was indeed a Triumph to them; and ſo they went on triumphing, not becauſe they were delivered from the King of *Iſrael,* as the CLEARER would have

have it, from whom (had they thought him ſo) they would have well known they could not have been delivered; that would have been a mad Occaſion of Triumph indeed; but that is in the CLEARER's cloudy Brain. Had they believed the firſt Part of their Speech, it would have ſpoiled their Joking, they could not poſſibly have made themſelves merry about a Perſon that had done ſuch Things; they could not have told where his Power might End, nor how they might be deceived in thinking it did end, any more than they could tell how it came to him; MORE, I affirm, they never would have intended it; neither perſecuting him, nor joking upon him; but have been the readieſt to come in to him, embrace his Faith, and ſtand up in his Defence. Why ſhould they not? Heaven was as good for them, as for others; and, if there was a Heaven, why ſhould they not uſe Means to attain it? But to think, they believed his Miracles, yet were not influenced by that Belief to attach themſelves to him, nor even to forbear perſecuting him; is, (let me turn it upon the CLEARER) to be little acquainted with human Nature indeed.

You ſee plainly, his Miracles never met with Reception, nor gained him Eſteem, enough to preſerve him from the bitterеſt Inſults, and the Paſſers-by, ſaying to him in his Teeth, with a Shake of their Heads, *Thou that deſtroyeſt the Temple, and rebuildeſt it in three Days, ſave thyſelf; if thou be the Son of God, come down from the Croſs.* However that Speech was underſtood, it is plain, they thought it romantic, they did not believe what he had done; they wanted more Evidence; therefore thoſe Miracles were wrought to no Effect; which is enough to diſcredit the whole Story; for acting without Effect, is not the Character of Divinity. O that when he was thus challenged, he had come down; but then, ſay the Parſons, there would have been no Merit in believing. Is there Merit only then in believing without reaſonable Foundation? And is Man to be rewarded for being irrational, and worthleſs! Nature by degenerating is it ennobled! Is the Way to Incorruptibility, Corruption?

As Miracle-mad, as the Jews were, and as much as every Wonder run away with them, they had yet received ſo little Conviction, and Impreſſion from the Goſpel-miracles, that the whole People made no Scruple to take the Blood of Jeſus upon them, and their Children; even when *Pilate*, to raiſe Parties among the Jews, and play them againſt one another, politicly gave out, their Rage was ill-founded againſt him, and that he was innocent; which ſhews, that Jeſus, beſides his Miracles, had given them Hopes that he was the triumphant Meſſiah; and when he peremptorily declared off, and deceived their Expectations, they were not able to bear it; from hence followed the Reſentment of the Populace, which otherwiſe would have been moſt prepoſterous. There are fine Decorations to the Story, the Eclipſe, and the Earthquake, and the ſplitting Temple; when they ſaw this; *This was the Son of God, to be ſure*, they ſaid; yet the People

of

of the Jews then were, and their Poſterity ſince have been, immoveable in Opinion of the contrary. And why Jeſus came to convince, and did not convince, it would poſe one to tell. The Phariſees provided with the greateſt Wiſdom againſt a fraudful Deſign of ſtealing the Body, which they profeſſed to *Pilate* their Apprehenſion of; the Body they knew would diſappear, and then the Diſciples would bear them down, he was riſen from the Dead; there would be no contradicting them by producing the Corpſe; that would be far enough out of the Way. The Diſciples Forehead, they were well apprized, was a ſure Card to them; they did not want Inſtances of that; and had one of a recent Date, in *Peter*'s denying, and curſing and ſwearing into the Bargain, *That he did not belong to Jeſus, nor know the Man.* They ſealed up the Sepulchre, and can and Thing be ſo plain, as that they intended to be there at the Time of the predicted Opening of it, to convince People of the Falſity of the foretold Reſurrection? Therefore the Time was certainly not, as they underſtood it; ſo that the Body did not walk away at the appointed Time, as the CLEARER would have it believed, according to the Apprehenſion of the Jews. The Chief Prieſts ſet a *Roman* Guard upon the Sepulchre; a Prevention of Deſign, one would think; but let us take a View of the Policy of thoſe Times, and ſee upon what Springs *Pilate* acted. The Jews were very numerous in *Paleſtine*, by far out-numbering the *Romans*. Had the Former roſe, the Latter, it is true, could have checked them by Force; but the *Roman* Policy, which was the exacteſt in the World, did not chuſe to waſte its Strength, where it might be ſpared, but governed by Art, when it could. *Pilate* upon this Maxim took Occaſion carefully to foment and ſpread a Diſſention, that would take off the Action of the Jews, as a united Body, which would have proved too hard for the *Romans* in the Country. Thus he gave Life to Commotions, he ſeemed active to ſuppreſs, and with Joy gratified a Sedition, yielding in Appearance reluctantly to it. You would have thought him forced to deliver up Jeſus by a Riot, he was glad to ſee go forward. He projected ſtill further. The Innocency of Jeſus was inſinuated by him, when he condemned him; and you will find this to be the fineſt Management, and greateſt Reach of human Policy. If Jeſus had died with no Parade, like a common Malefactor, it might have killed all the Efforts, and Hopes of his Party. *Pilate*'s Aim was not there; he drew too great Advantages from it, to deſire the Deſtruction of it. He ſaw how it tore, and waſted the Jews: He wanted to keep it alive, but not to have it victorious; for then there would have been a general Union, a Poſition his Art employed itſelf ever to keep off. Thus he would make neither Side complain, and neither Side get the better of one another. He gave Force ſometimes to one, and ſometimes to another, and adminiſtered a due Vigour. When the Chief Prieſts told him of Jeſus's Prophecy, he knew what to do

do immediately; and he ſhall make it good, thinks he, if it is in my Power; ſo he gave the Word to the Guard, (which he could not deny to the Phariſees Requeſt) to overlook or aſſiſt, if they could, any Proceedings on the Part of the Apoſtles, to ſham and perſuade a Reſurrection. This Policy of *Pilate*, the Author of the Trial, Politician as he is, has not weighed; but thinks it an arch Queſtion, *Whether the Roman Soldiers received the Word to wink at the Apoſtles Practices?* This is the Way, you muſt explain *Pilate*'s Conduct. Thus his Wife dreamed, like *Calphurnia*, which Thought he took up, as a *Roman*; and there were all the pretended Things in the World. But what means *Matthew*, and who does he think to get to believe him, when he ſays, *The Chief Prieſts gave the Soldiers Money to ſay, the Body of Jeſus was ſtolen away, and that it was a common Report among the Jews, to this Day?* Ver. 15. the laſt Chapter. What, did they believe a real Reſurrection, and not that have an Effect upon them neither? 'Tis putting Things down one's Throat, that would not delude an Ideot. Nothing was commonly reported then, nor is now, among the Jews, but that Jeſus was a *Deceiver*. The Chief Prieſts could not refuſe themſelves to the Conviction of this, if they really believed it; and it is being moſt ſtupidly credulous to think it. What Credit therefore is to be given to thoſe who would impoſe ſuch a Thing, as this? Which is what I was to ſhew.

The Evangeliſts writ, ſays the CLEARER, *to ſupply one another's Defects:* They were very Defective for inſpired Writers, it will be confeſſed; but then why do they repeat the ſame fooliſh Things over again, and abſurd Speeches? And why does *John*, inſtead of ſupplying Defects, make them? I am ſure, he wanted ſomebody to come after HIM. It is very ſtrange, the other Evangeliſts ſhould ALL miſs mentioning the Completion of ſo remarkable a Propheſy as we find cited, Chap. xix. verſe 36. of *John*; *Theſe Things were done, that the Scripture ſhould be fulfilled. A Bone of him ſhall not be broken.* It is certainly to be concluded, that a great deal was wanting ſure, to fortify the Cauſe of the Faith, or *John* would never have thought this neceſſary.

And now; did Jeſus come to give a Religion to the World? Did he obtain his End? The Part of the World, that profeſſes Chriſtianity, is it not inconſiderable with regard to the World? Being fruſtrated, what does it mark? If Men are to be benefited by Performances, they have no Concurrence in, why would not his immortal Power have done the Buſineſs as well as his mortal Paſſion? If Men are to be ſaved by a Merit not their own, why not by a Word not their own, which would be the ſame Thing? Do Advantages ariſe to thoſe prodigious populous Countries, *China* and *Japan*, from Chriſtianity, which they hoot, and ſtick the Preachers of upon Forks? What Sort of Diſtribution is it, that the little Speck of *Europe* is to be poſſeſſed of ſuch *eminent* Felicity? When our Parſons have anſwered theſe Queſtions, I will aſk them

ſome

ſome more. I will put one, or two Queſtions to the CLEARER: As God created the World out of nothing (for I don't ſuppoſe he holds another ſelf-exiſtent Being) and could overcome the ſeeming Impoſſibility of producing ſomething where nothing was, why did not he ſtrike out a nothing-extracted Stability to add to his nothing-extracted Creation, and how he came to make his Compoſition of Materials that wanted *mending*, as he ſays; with what Sneer let People JUDGE; and what is the Reſult of the whole, arguing Chance, or Deſign?

Was not God to chuſe who he would have Witneſſes of the Reſurrection? The CLEARER demands. It is worſe to be left to Choice, if Choice is ill made: And was he to chuſe in ſuch a manner too, that no Body was to be Witneſs of the Reſurrection, but whom no Body would believe? The old Strain of Management; but which might always as well have been ſpared, and the Thing itſelf omitted. As Parties are never Evidences, there can be ſaid to be no Evidences of the Reſurrection. We will ſooner believe, a Man makes a falſe Report; than our Senſes make a falſe Report; and that a Thing is, which contradicts the common Experience and Courſe of Nature; but we may aſſure ourſelves, that NATURE IS, AS IT EVER WAS, AND IS EVER LIKELY TO CONTINUE.

Lay theſe Things together, and you will bring it to this Concluſion: Every Hypotheſis that is not founded in Nature, is abſurd ——ſo not the Object of rational Belief.

Let us emancipate ourſelves from vain and fooliſh Fears, and as vain and fooliſh Hopes, and be ſure, that he, that has not philoſophized himſelf into Eaſe, will know none; Religion will take a thouſand Shapes to fright him; ghaſtly in all, ſhe will torment his Days; and his Nights will be ſtill more hideous. The Parſon gets on, when the Nurſe gets off (unleſs he rides double) and the ſaddled Beaſt is guided about at Will. But Philoſophy builds that Liberty, that Repoſe, no Alarm approaches, nor Terror ſhakes; and THE GREATEST GOOD IS WISDOM. This one Stroke while Liberty remains, or is *ſaid* to remain; when it dies, we have but to die with it.

THUS Ends my PHILOSOPHICAL FRIEND, who plainly ſhews, that he thinks *Diſbelief not criminal*. Whether it be or no, is the main Point our Adverſaries ought to prove; for if it be not, why ſhould Men ſuffer for it here, or hereafter? If it be criminal, the with-holding or not giving the neceſſary Evidence of Conviction is much more ſo; unleſs it be a Crime, not to be credulous. This Point ought to be conteſted freely. If an Enquirer cannot find what is called Truth, to be Truth; ſhould he own that he ſees what he don't? Or, acknowledge that to be true, which does not appear to him to be ſo? Or, ought he to ſtifle with Silence the Truth he has diſcovered? Is it moſt commendable, to vindicate the *Liberty* of Truth, or ſubmit to the *Slavery* of Error, and ſuppoſe the Enquirer cannot ſee Truth where it is to be ſeen; is it criminal to want mental or bodily Optics?

What

What is the Want of true Faith, but not being able to ſee Truth in a true Light? This Inability muſt either be owing to *the Nature of the Man*, which he cannot help; for all Men, *Enquirers* at leaſt, would ſee what is Right if they could, or it muſt be owing to the Means by which, or Medium through which Truth is to be ſeen, either the *one* lead Wrong, or the *other* makes a *falſe* Appearance, or obſcures the *true*; neither of theſe can the Enquirer prevent: So that his not ſeeing Truth, is not a *moral*, but a *phyſical* Fault; and *believing* without *ſeeing*, that is, without *Evidence*, is Nonſenſe and Abſurdity.—— In what manner ſoever this Point is examined, it will appear that Belief is no Virtue, or Faith is not Righteouſneſs and Unbelief, or Diſbelief, or what is reproachingly called *Infidelity*, *is no Sin*, no Breach of any moral Law.

The CLEARER is perhaps one of the moſt unfair Writers that ever attempted to manage an Argument. He ſpends all his Wit to pervert my Meaning, making me *ſay* Things I never *thought*; and then invidiouſly harangues thereon; and this with ſo much Wire-drawing Art, as almoſt to perſuade *me*, I had *expreſſed* what I never *intended*. So that he appears to be as one of thoſe *falſe Prophets*, *that can deceive*, *if poſſible*, *the very Elect*.

In every Place where he ſees the *latter* Edition different from the *Former*, he ſtrains the *Former* to mean ſomething erroneous, to exult and harangue upon; (though I was not conſcious to myſelf, that the Alterations I made were, as he repreſents them, but to expreſs myſelf in a clearer and better manner in the Beginning, which I think I have done;) to this End, he wilfully miſrepreſents my *Meaning*, to accuſe me of *Blundering*.

Becauſe I expreſſed my *own Senſe* in the Words of the Trial, or in the Words inverted, or referred by a Parity of Reaſoning from one Caſe to another, he calls it the *artful Abuſe of Language*, *perverting*, *altering*, *and miſapplying the Senſe*.

At firſt ſetting out, he quotes theſe Words of mine, to ſhew my Deſign in writing THE RESURRECTION CONSIDERED.

" My Deſign is to promote " that Veneration for WISDOM " and VIRTUE, which has been " debaſed and degraded by *Faith*; " by a Faith which has not ſent " *Peace* on Earth, but a *Sword*. " —— Where this fooliſh Faith " bears Sway, the Tree of Know- " ledge produces damning Fruit; " but under the *benign Influence* of " GEORGE OUR KING, in this " glorious Day of *Light* and *Li-* " *berty*, this divine Hag, and " her pious Witchcrafts, which " were brought forth in *Darkneſs*, " and nouriſhed by *Obſcurity*, " faint at the Approach of Day, " and vaniſh upon Sight." And, ſo great is his Indignation, that he makes thereon the following Remarks:

The Faith which the Goſpel propoſes in Chriſt Jeſus, the ever-bleſſed Son of God, and the only Name under Heaven by which we may be ſaved, is here with an aſtoniſhing Degree of Impiety called, a divine Hag with pious Witchcrafts. *Unhappy Man! What could he mean by this? I pity him from my Heart.*

But

But what could he mean by abuſing the King, unleſs he had a Mind to ſhew, that he is juſt as good a Subject as he is a Chriſtian.

Every ſerious Man will read theſe Paſſages with Abhorrence; and they are a Warning to every Reader to be upon his Guard againſt the Repreſentations made of the Doctrines of the Goſpel, and the Evidences of Chriſtianity, by ſo determined, and ſo inveterate an Enemy to both.

I ſhall only ſay to this, 'Tis evident that, to be revenged of me, he gives up the Cauſe of the Goſpel, acknowledging that *pernicious Faith* which I had deſcribed, is that *Faith* which he calls *Goſpel*, and contends for. And to make me odious, for ſaying, that under the Influence of HIS PRESENT MAJESTY, *whom God long preſerve, this Faith faints and vaniſhes away, which has debaſed and degraded* WISDOM *and* VIRTUE, *and which has not brought Peace on Earth, but a Sword*; he aſks, *What I mean by abuſing the King?* Now judge all ye People, whether I abuſe the KING, or he abuſes QUEEN COMMON-SENSE? By this, judge of the reſt of his *determined and inveterate* Miſconſtructions.

THE RESURRECTION DEFENDERS Stript of all DEFENCE.

Wherein is ſhewn,

That all the PREDICTIONS of it were unknown — That Chriſt's Miracles were not believed — That his Riſing again was not expected — That the Story of the Watch is incredible — That the Defenders, Mr. SYLVESTER, the CLEARER, Mr. CHANDLER, and Mr. JACKSON, diſagree in underſtanding the Appearances, as much as the Evangeliſts in relating them — More Proofs of Evangelical Diſcord — The Authority of the Goſpels of St. MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE and JOHN, and the ACTS OF THE APOSTLES, examined and diſcovered.

Audi alteram partem,
Ex veritate cauſa pendetur :
Sola bona quæ honeſta.

Come now, and let us Reaſon together, Iſai. i. 18.
Thou art weighed in the Balance, and found wanting. Dan. v. 27.

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M DCC XLV.

THE RESURRECTION DEFENDERS Stript of all Defence.

In a LETTER to a FRIEND.

§. 1. *The* INTRODUCTION.

SIR,

AS a Traveller on a Journey, to make the beſt of his Way, waits not for Company, ſo I ſhall not for your Converſation to finiſh our Diſcourſe on the Subject we had begun; that I may diſpatch it in fewer Words.

Having ſufficiently vindicated myſelf in the firſt Part, called the *Reſurrection Re-conſidered*, which Title I now think was a Miſnomen, I purpoſe to paſs over all Reflections, regard nothing but the Argument, and to handle it in as ſerious a manner, as I can, to gratify ſuch ſerious Enquirers as yourſelf.

You have been acquainted, that the CLEARER's Inſinuations againſt me are falſe, I hope to your Satisfaction; and I don't doubt to make it appear, that all his Arguments, with thoſe of Mr. SYLVESTER's, Mr. CHANDLER's, and Mr. JACKSON's, are of the ſame Kind; if common Senſe may be allowed to determine the Controverſy; for I lay Claim to nothing uncommon, though Mr. *Sylveſter* charges me with ſo doing; nor does the Argument on my Side need it; and that which does, ſhows a weak Cauſe: For plain Truth is eaſily defended, and is my Defence. She is the MINERVA that covers me with her inviſible Shield, and gives good Courage to a good Conſcience. But the eaſy Credulity of the Vulgar is that Bubble of Imagination, which is broke with the leaſt Blaſt of good Senſe.

§. 2. *Of Chriſt foretelling his own Reſurrection.*

I am now to begin with Chriſt's foretelling his own Reſurrection: I ſhewed, that what is ſaid to be delivered in public, that of the Temple and of *Jonah*, were Parables, and not underſtood; this is not denied. So that what was public, was not plain, and what was plain, was not public; and thoſe Predictions that were plain and private, 'tis ſaid, were not underſtood. This is well ſaid, becauſe the Circumſtances attending the Fact contradict the Predictions: Therefore, as the Diſciples fore-knew nothing of their Maſter's riſing from the Dead, the Jew Rulers muſt have been ignorant of any ſuch Prediction; and if ſo, the Story of ſetting a Watch, and the private Predictions, muſt have been Interpolations.

Againſt this 'tis urged, *1ſt*, That the five Predictions to the Diſciples were not all delivered in private. *2dly*, That they were not enjoined Secrecy in the Caſe. *3dly*, That ſome Diſciples might acquaint the Jew Rulers with it. And, *4thly*, that they liſtened to the Prophecy, becauſe they were convinced, that Jeſus wrought Miracles.

I ſhall anſwer all theſe Objections to my Arguments.

§. 3. *Whether the Predictions were all delivered in private.*

Obj. That the five Predictions of Jeſus to his Diſciples were not all delivered in private. The *Clearer* ſays, (p. 45.) to take them as I have ranged them, 'The firſt and third were made 'to the Diſciples: Is there not 'Reaſon then to ſuppoſe they 'were made to more than to the 'Twelve, *for he had ſeventy Diſ-'ciples.*'

Anſw. There is no Reaſon to ſuppoſe this the Caſe the firſt Time; for St. *Luke* (ix. 18.) ſays, *When he was alone praying, his Diſciples were with him.* Could he be alone, when ſeventy Perſons were with him? I think it ſignifies, that *leſs* than the Twelve, rather than *more*, were with him; for his being *alone* argues Privacy, and that at moſt it can mean no more, than that he was with the Twelve alone, mentioned a little before, ver. 10, 12. Beſides, this was at a Time when he enquired of them privately, what Perſon the People took him to be? Tho', by the Way, if Jeſus knew Men's Thoughts, as the Evangeliſts ſay, what need had he to aſk his Diſciples, what Men ſaid of him? For in that Caſe he muſt have known before-hand, what Men ſaid, and what they would Anſwer.

The third Time was, when *he paſſed thro' Galilee, and would not that any Man ſhould know it*, (*Mark* ix. 30.) therefore he had not the Multitude of the Diſciples, nor the Seventy with him; for then he muſt have been known. Beſides, at this third Time, they that heard, did not underſtand what he ſaid, nor aſked what he meant, (ver. 32.) therefore, 'tis more likely they were not Seven, than that they were Seventy, unleſs all the Diſciples were without Underſtanding.

So that every one of the five Predictions to the Diſciples were private to the Apoſtles only.

§. 4. *Whe-*

§. 4. *Whether Secrecy was enjoined the Apoſtles?*

Obj. 'But they were not enjoined Secrecy in the Affair; 'only in this Point, that Jeſus 'was the Chriſt.'

Anſ. The Reaſon why Jeſus deſired Privacy was, according to *Mark*, (ix. 31.) for this very Cauſe, that *he taught his Diſciples, and ſaid unto them, the Son of Man muſt be killed, and riſe again*; and this the Diſciples kept private, ſays *Mark*, ver. 10. After the Transfiguration he charged them they ſhould tell no Man what Things they had ſeen, till the Son of Man was riſen from the Dead; *And they kept that Saying with themſelves, queſtioning one with another, what the riſing from the Dead ſhould mean.* But St. *Luke*, (ix. 44.) has it only, *that he ſhould be delivered into the Hands of Men*, without a Word of his riſing again, the moſt eſſential Point; ſo that either the one ſeems to have ſtretched, or the other to have forgot himſelf, and wrote without the Guidance of the Holy Spirit; for that St. *John* (xiv. 26.) was *to bring all Things to their Remembrance*, that Chriſt had ſaid unto them. St. *Luke* (ix. 45.) writes, that *they underſtood not this Saying, and it was hid from them; that they perceived it not, and they feared to aſk him of that Saying.* Surely he kept them in a very awful Subjection! But what did they not underſtand? 'Tis very plain they did not underſtand what he meant, that he ſhould be delivered into the Hands of Men, and riſe from the Dead.

The fourth Time, when Jeſus is ſaid to deliver this Secret to the Twelve, apart from the reſt, it was ſecret enough, for *they knew not the Things that were ſpoken*, that is, they knew not what he ſaid; therefore they could not diſcover it. Fit Receptacles theſe for the Secrets of Divine Wiſdom! There was no Fear of their diſcloſing the Divine Secrets. 'Tis no Wonder they are not yet diſcloſed; and that the Myſteries of the Kingdom are always explaining, and never explained. If *they* underſtood not their Maſter, how ſhould *we*, who have our Leſſons from *them*

Obj. But ſays the *Clearer*, 'Tho' 'the Diſciples did not underſtand 'the Meaning of the Prophecy, 'they underſtood the Language 'or import of the Words, or elſe 'what did St. *Peter* reprove our 'Lord for?'

Anſ. How they underſtood not the Meaning, but the Import of the Words, paſſes my Underſtanding: St. *Peter* underſtood what he ſaid about his Sufferings and Death, but not what he ſaid about his riſing again; and 'tis moſt trifling to ſay, 'If they under-'ſtood the literal Senſe of the 'Words ſpoken to them, they 'might report them, and others 'underſtand the Meaning, tho' 'they did not; and thus at leaſt 'the chief Prieſts might come to 'know that Jeſus had foretold 'his Reſurrection.' If they knew the literal Meaning of the Words, they knew all the Meaning the Words had; for 'tis not pretended they had any other. But I ſhould never have done, if I was to take Notice of all their weak Arguments.

§. 5. *Objections anſwered.*

Obj. 'But the Thing they did not underſtand was, how the Meſ-'ſiah, who, according to their 'Notions, was to live for ever, 'was to die and riſe again.'

Anſ. But if they underſtood what he ſaid, they had the more Reaſon to believe he would live for ever, if he was to riſe to life again, after he was dead.

Obj. 'The Apoſtles were en-'joined Secrecy, not with reſpect 'to the Death and Reſurrection 'of Jeſus; but with reſpect ex-'preſly, to this Point only, that 'he was the Chriſt.'

Anſ. But I have proved the former Part of this Aſſertion to be wrong. The *Clearer* himſelf tells us of another Secrecy enjoined the Diſciples, beſides his being the Chriſt, which is the Viſion of the Transfiguration. Therefore the Injunction was not with reſpect to that 'one Point only,' as the *Clearer* ſays, p. 50. That ſuch a fine Show ſhould be made only to three Men, and kept private till after the Reſurrection, is as dark a Story as the Viſion is ſaid to be bright.

Obj. The *Clearer* argues (p. 50.) 'That the Prohibition to divulge 'it, was enjoined the Diſciples, 'that they ſhould not from hence 'raiſe falſe Notions of Chriſt's 'Power.'

Anſ. Did their keeping it a Secret prevent what falſe Notions they might receive from it? But how could they raiſe falſe Notions of his Power, if he was God as well as Man? And why was the Voice of God ſecreted from the People's Knowledge? Jeſus was declared to be the Son of God to a very few; and they too that already believed it. 'Twas a *ſtill ſmall Voice*. *John* the Baptiſt and Jeſus only heard it before, and theſe three his Familiars now. Had the Voice ſpoke to the Scribes, Phariſees, and Infidels, they, perhaps, if they had heard the Son declared, would have wanted to know the Father; but this Voice was not fit for Prieſts to hear; for they that keep others in Ignorance, ought to be kept in Ignorance. Yet, as I wiſh their Converſion, I would they had heard; for perhaps the Father might have converted them, tho' the Son could not.

§. 6. *Of Jeſus enjoining his Diſciples to ſecrete his Character.*

But wherefore did Jeſus charge his Diſciples to tell no Man that he was the Chriſt? The *Clearer* ſays, (p. 47, 48.) to prevent the ill Effects of it; 'for ſuch Decla-'ration to the People, according 'to their Notion of Chriſt, would 'have amounted to a Claim of 'temporal Power, which our 'Lord (he ſays) took all proper 'Occaſions to diſclaim.'

Anſ. Had he done ſo, in all Probability he had ſaved his Life. But if he wrought Miracles, he had more than temporal Power; and therefore had no need to fear any Thing, when he was inveſted with a Power Divine. Does he mean that the Fears of Death were ſo ſtrong in him, that he forbad his Diſciples while he was living to own him the Chriſt; but commanded them, after he was dead and gone, to conſtrain all Men to believe and own it by the

the Terrors of Damnation? If saying he was the Chriſt, amounted to a Claim of temporal Power, according to the Peoples Notion, ſhould not his firſt and chief Buſineſs have been to ſet his Diſciples and the People right in their Notions, what the expected Meſſiah really was, before he declared himſelf that Perſon? Had he convinced them of the Former, the Way had been paved to the Latter. What ſignified referring the People to *ſearch the Scriptures*, and telling them that *they teſtified of him*, when they did not underſtand its Teſtimony; For while their Notion remained of a temporal Redeemer, they could not ſee the Scriptures teſtified of him. To what End were they to ſearch the Scriptures, which repreſented the Meſſiah to them in a wrong Character, as a Prince poſſeſſing, and not diſclaiming temporal Power? That the Father ſhould deceive his own People by his Prophets; and they through Faith in that Word ſhould be ſo bigotted to the Deception, that the Son could not undeceive them, is ſo very unaccountable, that it can paſs with none but a thorough-paced Believer. To what End did he make them his Apoſtles? How could the World believe in him, if he prevented himſelf from being known to the World? *How could they believe in him on whom they had not heard? And how could they hear without a Preacher? And how could they preach if they were not ſent*, but forbidden? If Jeſus did not come to make himſelf known as the Chriſt, wherefore came he? If he did, why did he forbid his Diſciples to make him known? And why were they ſent to preach that his Kingdom was at Hand? If his coming was to be made public, why was Secrecy enjoined? If the Old Teſtament gave the Meſſiah a Character the New does not, 'tis plain they differ as widely as Fleſh and Spirit, Things temporal and ſpiritual. 'Tis probable, Jeſus finding his Diſciples rude and ignorant, knew that their manner of divulging his Pretenſions would do him more Injury than Advantage, therefore he forbad their telling it, and cautiouſly delivered it himſelf to proper Perſons, for he knew ſome too well to commit himſelf to them, *John* ii. 24.

§. 7. *Whether the Diſciples or* Judas *divulged the Prediction of Chriſt's Reſurrection?*

'Tis objected, that ſome Diſciples, or at leaſt *Judas*, might acquaint the Scribes and Phariſees with the private Prediction of Jeſus concerning his dying and riſing again.

And yet the *Clearer* ſays, (p. 71.) that 'There is not the leaſt 'Intimation in the Goſpel, that 'the Chief Prieſts knew the Opi-'nion of the Diſciples in this 'Caſe, or that they would have 'conſidered it of any Weight or 'Moment at all.' For, as he ſays, 'The Rulers had them in Con-'tempt;' how then did they believe their Story if they heard it? But this they could not do; for 'tis not at all probable the Diſciples ſhould diſcover what they knew not, for they own that they did not underſtand Jeſus was to riſe again from the Dead; this the Scripture and the *Clearer* confeſs,

ſes, p. 49. and what Men do not underſtand they do not know. But that ſome of the Diſciples ſhould blab the Secret, and ſurprize the Scribes and Phariſees with the Diſcovery, or that *Judas*, who betrayed his Maſter, might betray his Secrets; as it is not at all likely, for the Reaſon already given, ſo 'tis probable the Jew Rulers gave no manner of Regard to it, if any of them did. 'Tis very unlikely they ſhould Credit ſo idle a Story told them by his credulous Diſciples, at leaſt what *Judas* ſaid, who in their Opinion muſt needs paſs for a deluded Fool, and a treacherous Villain. Beſides, *Judas* making a Sale of his Maſter, ſhews he did not believe a Word of it, unleſs he was in Hopes after his Reſurrection to ſell him again. But had the Scribes and Phariſees been told of it, why ſhould they fear leſt he ſhould be as good as his Word, when at the ſame Time not one of thoſe who believed in him, believed one Word about it: For if ever they heard the Prediction, they regarded it ſo little, that they forgot it, tho' it was of the laſt Importance to them to remember it; and how ſhould they do otherwiſe, if they did not underſtand what was ſaid about it. St. *John* delivers it by Way of Excuſe, that *as yet they knew not the Scriptures that he was to riſe again from the Dead*. But if they knew not what the Scriptures or old Prophecies ſaid, they knew what their Maſter had propheſied, if he ſaid what is reported, which was enough to inform them of it. The Words *as yet*, the Defenders ſay, is a Kind of Proof that they knew it afterwards; But *none of them know it yet* out of the old Prophets. Thoſe enigmatical Expreſſions of the Temple and *Jonah*, which the Apoſtles did not underſtand when ſpoken, they might know, but *as yet* had not given them the Force of Prophecies. Words not underſtood, as they raiſe no Expectations of any Thing to come in the Hearers, ſo they foretel nothing, and are no Prophecies. Mr. *Sylveſter* has found the Prophecy only in Types, and Mr. *Chandler* in ſtrained Inferences. This ſhews they are ſo diſtreſſed to find any of this Sort, that they are obliged to make them; for he that makes the Scripture to ſpeak what it does not, makes Scripture to ſerve his Turn.

The *Clearer* objects. 'Suppoſe now the Diſciples want of 'Underſtanding to be true, it 'ſhews their Honeſty and Sincerity in reporting it fairly; and 'aſks what Purpoſe could be ſerv'ed by it.'

I anſwer, *viri vera ſimplicitate boni!* Are we then to depend on the Sincerity and Honeſty of Men that want Underſtanding? Alas, how eaſily are ſuch Men deceiv'ed! But this Purpoſe it might ſerve, ſuppoſing them not altogether ſo honeſt as the *Clearer* preſumes. When they ſaid their Maſter was riſen ſome Jews might 'put this Queſtion to them, 'which they could not anſwer:' You ſay your Maſter roſe from the Dead, and that he knew all Things; how came it then to paſs that he did not foretel his own Reſurrection? To which they, 'to prevent the ſame Queſtion 'being aſked again,' told of ſome Predictions of this Sort delivered in

in a private manner; and the Reaſon they never divulged them before his Reſurrection, nor expected it themſelves, was, becauſe they never rightly knew what the Words meant, but took them for Parables. Pleading their Incapacity to underſtand them, is the beſt Excuſe they could give for not divulging them.

§. 8. *Whether the Jew Rulers believed the Prediction of Chriſt's Reſurrection?*

The *Clearer* Queries, 'What 'then is to be ſaid for the Chief 'Prieſts, why did they fear his 'Reſurrection?' And anſwers, 'Becauſe he had foretold it, that 'they took him for a great Pro'phet, and had been Witneſſes 'to his Miracles; therefore they 'liſtened to a Prophecy in this 'Caſe, which in any other they 'would have deſpiſed; for had 'the Jews been perſuaded that 'he performed no Wonders in 'this Life, they would not have 'been afraid of ſeeing any done 'by him after his Death,'

Anſ. Nor does it appear they were. This is, Sir, putting it upon a different Footing than what St. *Matthew* does; but let us try the Caſe in this Light. That Jeſus had foretold his Reſurrection, at leaſt to the Scribes and Phariſees, is not proved, and that he did it at all, wants conſiſtent Proof; for had the Diſciples known it, they muſt have foreknown his riſing again; but that none of them foreknew this, is confeſſed by Words and Deeds. If they did not ſuſpect him to riſe again, who believed in him, and (as 'tis reported) heard him foretel it plainly, and frequently, how could *they* expect it who believed him not, nor the flying Reports that were told of him; nor, as far as we can find, ever heard of any ſuch Prediction from himſelf or others? But waving the Advantage, ſuppoſe the Chief Prieſts heard of this Prophecy, would they regard it from the Mouth of one whom they put to Death as a Deceiver? Or, ſuppoſe they thought him to be a great Prophet, could they poſſibly put him to Death, to ſuch a Kind of Death as an Impoſtor, and wiſh his Blood might be on them and their Children? Or believing him to 'be a great Prophet, did they therefore ſuſpect he might poſſibly riſe again? Were great prophets uſed to riſe again? Or is it poſſible for them to do ſo? No certainly; Prophets once dead lay as quiet as other Men. But 'The Wonders he had wrought 'in his Life made them liſten to 'a Prophecy in this Caſe.' Did they on this Account ſuſpect he would do Wonders when he was Dead? It cannot be: The *Clearer* ſays, (p. 39.) when they ſaw him on the Croſs, 'They thought 'they had found the Extent of 'his Power, and that he could 'not ſave himſelf.' But ſuppoſe all that has or can be ſuppoſed, (p. 61.) that 'They feared he 'would come from the Grave, 'armed with Power to take Ven'geance of their wicked and 'cruel Treatment of him.' Did they for this ſet a Guard of Soldiers to kill him again, as Mr. *Chandler* inſinuates, p. 56, 57. 'Had he appeared as himſelf, 'who knows what the Watch 'might have done, in acting the

ſame

'ſame bloody Scene over again, 'were it not for the Angels that 'defended him?' Or did the Chief Prieſts ſet a Watch to give them Warning to run away, if he ſhould riſe again? Nay, but they ſet a Watch to be certainly informed of the Truth. How could they doubt but the Truth would diſcover itſelf, by his perſonal Appearance, if he ſhould riſe; or by his Non-appearance, if he ſhould not? The Caſe was of ſuch a Nature, there was no Reaſon to believe it could be concealed; *fieri aliter non poteſt*; Light cannot be hid; and *no Man lights a Candle to put it under a Buſhel, but on a Candleſtick*. Sir, *they* muſt naturally conclude, as *we* ſhould have done in the ſame Caſe, that there was nothing in it, if they ſaw nothing of it.

§. 9. *Whether the Goſpel-Hiſtory be a Proof that the Jews believed the Miracles of Jeſus?*

But tho', to give their Argument full Scope, I have ſuppoſed the Scribes, Prieſts, and Phariſees, had ſome Apprehenſions from Miracles; yet now I intend to enter into the Merits of the Cauſe, and examine what Influence the Miracles of Jeſus, as recorded in the Goſpel, had upon them.

The *Clearer* has Recourſe to the Goſpels, to prove that the Scribes and Phariſees believed the Miracles of Chriſt: No doubt, but thoſe Writers would have it thought ſo, and unthinking Chriſtians believe it; but what Argument is this with Deiſts, with whom his Engagement is, and whom he ſhould attempt to convince! How is this Evidence a Proof to thoſe that doubt the Evidence by which Arguments are found for both Sides? And if for what makes againſt itſelf, thoſe will be looked upon as the moſt credible: For not ſo much Heed is given to what an Evidence affirms on the Side he eſpouſes, as to what probable Facts he inadvertently confeſſes on the contrary Side. For what can that Evidence prove to the Satisfaction of the Enquirer, who finds Reaſon by his Enquiry to be diſſatisfied about the Evidence? Witneſſes that diſagree, prove nothing in their own Favour; for their Diſagreements deſtroy their own Authority, and make void what they inſinuate by what they confeſs. The Conſiſtency and Validity of the Writings out of which the Proofs are taken, and the Probability of every Thing they relate, ſhould firſt be cleared up, before the Proofs out of it in their Favour are to be taken for granted. For Deiſts think it reaſonable, that as theſe Hiſtories relate more improbable, and much more incredible Things than other Hiſtories, they ought to bring with them ſome more ſubſtantial Proof than others to confirm the Truth of ſuch Prodigies as they relate; or elſe, that every Relation in them which is not as probable as other true Hiſtory ſhould ſtand for nought; that what is to paſs for the current Coin of *Cæſar* ſhould have *Cæſar*'s Image and Superſcription on it. Stories that are not miraculous may paſs for Truth, and often do, tho' they are not ſo. All the Difference that I know of between a Believer, and an Unbeliever, is this; one can believe what has the Face of Romance, and the other cannot. In common

mon Things they both believe, and may be impoſed on alike. For Inſtance, ſhould it be reported, that the Archbiſhop of *Canterbury* with his Coach and Horſes went over the *Thames*, in the Ferry, from *Lambeth* to *Palace-yard*, on a certain Day; it might be credible, and Deiſts and Chriſtians might believe it alike, tho' the Report be falſe: But ſhould it be affirmed, that his Grace's Horſes flew over the *Thames*, with the Coach after them, even by the Aſſiſtance of Angels, I fear it would be incredible to thoſe who are ſlow of Heart to believe all that is written or reported, even though the Bench of Biſhops had no more Grace than to ſwear it, with Reverence to them be it ſpoken, was it poſſible that they could report any Thing ſo incredible: And why muſt we needs believe, on the bare Report of unknown Reporters, Things ſeemingly as impoſſible or unlikely, becauſe they are generally believed by thoſe that never made a particular Enquiry. Many Believers have not Time, ſome have no Diſpoſition, others no Capacity to examine rightly. Beſides, when Principles are fixed by Authority as only right, it diſcountenances all Examination; and in all ſuch Caſes it is done for that End, leſt Men ſhould ſee different than their Seers would have them. For my own Part, Sir, I am determined to believe what appears to me to be right, and to examine into the Appearances of Things. Truth is the Touchſtone of the Goſpel, not the Goſpel of Truth; and the Rule of Truth is the Reaſon and Nature of Things. No Book can prove itſelf, but by its own internal Marks; and muſt periſh with the Authority by which it is ſupported, unleſs it have this eternal Character. But I muſt cut ſhort this copious Subject, becauſe I have many Articles to run thro'.

§. 10. *Whether the Jew Rulers believed Chriſt's Miracles?*

The *Clearer* endeavours to prove the Book by the Book, *viz.* that the Prieſts, Scribes, and Phariſees believed the Miracles of Chriſt; but the Inſtances he brings, are no more a Proof, than that telling a Story is a Proof of it. Such Proofs may do for Believers; but not for thoſe he has to do with. If the Effects do not agree with the Cauſes, thoſe Cauſes are conſequently diſproved: As the Tree is known by its Fruits, ſo are the Premiſes by their Conſequences. That the Rulers did not believe them is plain, from what is there objected, *Have any of the Rulers of the People believed in him?* And had they been ſatisfied with the Reality of his Miracles, they would not have deſired others. Why does Jeſus call upon them to believe his Works, *John* x. 25, 26. 38. but becauſe they didn't believe them, can any Thing be more plain? They accuſe him, *Joh.* viii. 83. of bearing record of himſelf, without other ſufficient Teſtimony, and therefore that it was not true; to provoke him perhaps to work ſome Miracle publicly in their Sight. They called for Signs and Wonders, that they might believe, yet he gave them none, when they called for them: Though all the Wonders he is ſaid to work, was for this End, that they might believe, yet this End they never effected. A bare Declaration that he was the

the Chriſt, did not convince them; nor did his Prophecies, that he ſhould riſe again, convince even his Diſciples, which renders both doubtful. And 'tis owned, that he obtained leaſt Credit among thoſe who ſhould have known him beſt, his own Countrymen, and his own Houſe. An evident Miracle for the Proof of his Miſſion ſeems all along to be the Conteſt between the unbelieving Jews, and him. The GREAT AUTHOR of *the Trial* ſeems to allow it, by ſaying, that Jeſus put the Proof of his Miſſion on the Truth of the Reſurrection before predicted: But this Prediction, as well as the Reſurrection, appear to want that clear and proper Evidence, which 'tis reaſonable to expect in ſo important and extraordinary a Caſe.

§. 11. *The Clearer's Arguments to prove Chriſt's Miracles believed, prove the contrary.*

Sir, If 'the Jews believed his 'Miracles, and had a Jealouſy, 'that he might poſſibly be the 'Chriſt,' as the *Clearer* inſinuates, (p. 39.) would they have uſed him as they did? The High Prieſt putting the Queſtion to him in a ſolemn Manner, Whether he was the Chriſt, does not prove that they ſuſpected it; it only proves his Pretenſions to that Character, not ſo *Barabbas*, or any other common Malefactor. They had put that Queſtion to him before, *John* x. 24. and probably often; for had they been ſuſpicious of it, and for that Reaſon made a ſolemn Enquiry, they would have been better ſatisfied with his Anſwer, than it appears they were. He told them he was the Chriſt, and what was the Conſequence? The High Prieſt rent his Clothes, and cried out Blaſphemy for his aſſuming that Character: And perhaps the High Prieſt aſked him with no other View, but to condemn him out of his own Mouth, whether he denied, or affirmed it. Had he denied it, they had Proof of his Pretenſions; and he affirming it, they condemned it for Blaſphemy: This might perhaps be to provoke him to work a Miracle then, to prove it; for Jeſus told them they ſhould ſee one hereafter, but that would not ſatisfy them; and the High Prieſt ſeemed obliged to make the Demand in that ſolemn manner, that he might give him an Anſwer, becauſe he anſwered nothing to Queſtions that were aſked him.

Again, When *Pilate* was willing to acquit him, leſt he ſhould not be crucified, *all the People*, as well as the Prieſts, the Scribes and Phariſees, cried out earneſtly, *Crucify him, crucify him, his Blood be on us and on our Children*; which ſhews, that what was the Senſe of the Rulers, was the Senſe of all the People, except thoſe that were his Diſciples; therefore his Miracles were not generally believed.

'*Obj.* 'But St. *Mark* ſays, the 'People were influenced by their 'Prieſts to make this clamorous 'Demand.'

Anſw. With St. *Mark's* Leave, If the People had been well acquainted with his miraculous Cures, as 'tis at other Places inſinuated, they could not have been thus unanimous with *loud Voices* in making ſuch Demand; and I think, that 'He ſhews him-

'ſelf

'ſelf to be little acquainted with the Sentiments of human Nature,' who thinks they could believe his Miracles, believe him a Prophet, and yet be influenced to ſpeak and act in ſuch a manner.

Again, *Herod* was glad when he had him in his Cuſtody, becauſe he expected to ſee him do ſome Miracle to ſave his Life: But when he found nothing of that Power diſplayed by him, he concluded it was not in him, thereupon he and his Men of War deſpiſed him, and *ſet him at nought*; concluding certainly, that the extraordinary Power of God was moſt neceſſary to be diſplayed, on the moſt extraordinary and neceſſary Occaſions; and therefore they mockt him on the Croſs, ſaying, *He ſaved others, himſelf he cannot ſave.* And, *Ah! thou that ſavedſt others, ſave thyſelf, come down from the Croſs, and we will believe thee*; i. e. We will believe thou canſt ſave others, if now thou canſt ſave thyſelf. The *Clearer* ſuppoſing this to be Mockery, argues, that the Mockery lies only in the laſt Words, *himſelf he cannot ſave*, but that in the Former, *he ſaved others*, they ſpake as they meant, and 'acknowledge his Miracles by 'which others are ſaved.' But then theſe are Words of Pity, and from them no Mockery can be drawn: But if the Words, *himſelf he cannot ſave*, are not ſuch as betoken Pity, the whole is Mockery, and ſignify, they believed nothing leſs than the former Words expreſs, that *he ſaved others*; theſe therefore are Irony, if the others are Drollery. As if they had ſaid, See the Proofs of his ſaving others, when he cannot ſave himſelf. It ſeems naturally impoſſible, they ſhould believe he ſaved others, confeſs it, and droll upon it, or make it the Subject of Mockery, from which none can be drawn.

'They go on with their Mockery, ſays the *Clearer*, '*If* '*he be the King of Iſrael, let him* '*now come down from the Croſs*: 'Why all this Triumph in being 'delivered from the King of 'Iſrael, had they never ſuſpected 'he might probably prove ſo in-'deed? What Occaſion for this 'ſudden Joy and Exultation?' Certainly none, had they ſuſpected he might have proved ſo, what Advantage was it to them, to crucify one whom they ſuſpected might one Day be their King, and deliver them from their Subjection to a foreign Yoke? Had this Gentleman quoted the whole Text, it had ſet him right. *If he be the King of Iſrael, let him come down from the Croſs, and we will believe in him*, which ſhews they did not believe his miraculous Power, nor that he was the Chriſt. As if they had ſaid, If he be Chriſt the King of Iſrael, as he would be eſteemed, let him deliver himſelf now from the *Roman* Power, without which he cannot deliver us, nor be our King, and then we will believe his Power and Character.

St. *Matthew* and St. *Mark* ſay, *They that paſſed by railed on him, and reviled him, wagging their Heads, and ſaying, Thou that deſtroyeſt the Temple, and buildeſt it in three Days, ſave thyſelf, if thou be the Son of God, come down from the Croſs:* This is Mockery both in Words and Geſture. *He ſaid, He is the Son of God*, if he be, *let God deliver him now, if he will have*

bout him, i. e. for his Son; let God ſhew it by a ſignal Deliverance; which ſhews they had no ſuch extraordinary Opinion of him, and alſo the ſmall Credit and Confidence they put in him, or his miraculous Works.

§. 12. *Miracles without correſpondent Effects, improbable.*

The *Clearer* ſays, (p. 40.) 'Their Mirth did not laſt long: 'When Chriſt died, Nature ſeemed to die with him; the Sun 'was darkened, the Veil of the 'Temple was rent in the Midſt, 'the Graves opened, the Rocks 'rent, *&c.*'

And yet the Nature of the Jews remained the ſame; their Hearts were not rent, though the Rocks rent; nor quaked, though the Earth quaked; and though the Graves opened, their Underſtandings appear not to be opened! What a ſtrange Thing is Infidelity, that no Miracle can work upon it. The only Perſons theſe Miracles were wrought to affect, were unaffected by any, which is itſelf another Miracle! unleſs they were wrought only for Show, and to be gazed at, to affect Mens Eyes, and not their Hearts; or were they deſigned not to do it? Or could the Devil's Power prevent God's from taking Effect? Indeed the Evangeliſts bring in the *Roman* Centurion, ſaying, *This was a righteous Man*, and the People ſmiting their Breaſts. But though all were ſmitten, none were wounded, none are ſaid to be converted. The *Clearer* ſays, 'Probably the Scribes and Pha'riſees withdrew ſilently, un'willing to diſcover any Fear or 'Apprehenſion before the Peo'ple.' And 'tis as probable they ſaw none of theſe Sights, ſince we read of no Effect theſe Miracles had upon them. If we may judge by Probabilities, is it probable that God, or Chriſt, ſhould work Wonders in vain, ſo that an uncommon Power ſhould be exerted, and produce no common Effect! Or that Miracles ſhould be wrought to contradict Miracles! As thoſe muſt be that have a contrary Effect to their natural Tendency, and the Deſign of the Great Author. For according to the *Clearer*, concerning Chriſt's Miracles, 'The Queſtion now is (ſaith he, p. 38.) what Effect this 'had upon the Scribes and Chief 'Prieſts? That they were ex'tremely alarmed, appears plain'ly; and that they ſought his 'Life, as the only Method to 'ſtop the Influence he gained o'ver the People, is notorious. 'But were they clear of all 'Doubts themſelves? Had they 'no Miſgivings of Mind that he 'might poſſibly be what he pre'tended to be?' I ſay, Sir, to me it ſeems impoſſible, that they ſhould ſeek his Life to ſtop the Influence he gained over the People by miraculous Works, or that they ſought his Life, and brought about his Death in a judicial Way, and yet had Miſgivings or Doubts in their Minds, that he might poſſibly be what he pretended to be. 'Whoever can ſup'poſe it, ſhews himſelf to be but 'little acquainted with the Sen'timents of human Nature.' If the *Romans* had acted thus towards him, for Fear of his becoming a King, and breaking their Power, it had been more reaſonable;

able; but that the Jews believing his Miracles ſhould crucify him, for Fear of his delivering them from the *Romans*, is altogether abſurd. Had they believed he wrought many Miracles, they had the leſs Reaſon to fear the *Roman* Power, and the more to let him alone, and let the *Romans* deal with him. But the Caſe is, while ſome believed him to be *a good Man*, it was the Opinion of others, *that he deceived the People*; and the great Men objected, that only the Ignorant believed in him. If Probability may be allowed, we may judge of Effects by their Cauſes, and of Cauſes by their Effects; *i. e.* wonderful Cauſes, will produce wonderful Effects; and where no wonderful Effects are produced, 'tis probable there were no wonderful producing Cauſes: Or otherwiſe they are of no Conſequence or Signification; they proceed from no natural Cauſe; therefore, they being not a Link of the great Chain of Nature, have no natural Effects; they appear to be Works in vain; extraordinary Power diſplayed to no Purpoſe; being out of Nature, Nature is not affected by them; they go no farther than themſelves. A Trial of Skill one may call it, that leaves every Thing as it found them; him that is unjuſt, to be unjuſt ſtill; he that is filthy, to be filthy ſtill; he that is righteous, to be righteous ſtill; and he that is a Fool, a Deceiver, or a Believer, a wiſe or an honeſt Man, or an Infidel, to be the ſame ſtill. So it was if the Rulers and Men of Learning among the Jews had been Witneſſes of his Power to work Miracles, as 'tis inſinuated, and yet behaved in ſo violent and outrageous a manner againſt him. That they ſhould conſpire to put Jeſus to Death, becauſe he wrought Miracles, is to out-do Miracles.

If it be objected, that this was the Will of God, *that they ſeeing might ſee, and not perceive; and hearing might hear, and not underſtand; leſt they ſhould ſee with their Eyes, and hear with their Ears, and underſtand with their Hearts, and ſhould be converted and ſaved*; and that the Lord gave them *Eyes that they might not ſee, Ears that they might not hear, and Hearts that they might not underſtand.* Then one would be apt to think it had been more gracious to have given them neither Eyes, Ears, or Hearts; and that the Lord had better concealed his Wiſdom, by ſaying nothing. This either made them rebellious, or hardened them in their Rebellion; without which, 'tis confeſſed, they might have been converted. But this is throwing all the Odium on God, to make the Story good; and rather than that may be falſe, he muſt be rendered cruel and unjuſt. This Way of accounting for ſuch unaccountable Things, may account for any Thing, be it ever ſo abſurd. Nor will a judicial Hardening ſalve the Sore, and be the conſiſtent Practice of him that *delights not in the Death of a Sinner, but rather that he turn and live*, of him *whoſe tender Mercies are over all his Works*, of him in whom *Mercy rejoices againſt Judgment*, and of him who *came to call Sinners to Repentance*, and *to ſeek and to ſave the loſt Sheep of the Houſe of Iſrael*. Sir, I muſt own, I think in this Caſe, as 'tis repreſented, nothing could prevent

Nature from yielding, but a ſupernatural hardening Power, an inflexible Stubbornneſs miraculouſly infuſed in the leading Jews, or they muſt have ſhuddered, and recoiled, if they had ſeen ſuch amazing Power diſplayed by the mighty Jews.

§. 13. *Of the Jews aſcribing Chriſt's Miracles to the Devil.*

Obj. 'But the Jews, who could 'not deny his Miracles, aſcribed 'them to the Power of the De-'vil.'

Anſ. 'Tis wonderful ſtrange, that the Lord Jeſus never caſt this Devil out of their Hearts, and yet caſt out all Devils every where elſe! Or that the Devil of Infidelity ſhould be an invincible Devil! If the Devil can work Miracles as well as God, and they are not eaſy to diſtinguiſh, and Miracles are the Proofs of a divine Miſſion, theſe Proofs are not eaſily known; and then we are little the better for having it ſigned and ſealed with Miracles. Mr. *Hardy*, a reverend, grave Pate, that wrote againſt Mr. *Chubb*, ſays, they are diſtinguiſhed by ſuperior Power; if ſo, Good and Evil are not Criterea, but Power gives Right; and the Devil is right, when he is not contradicted, or confounded by ſuperior Power: But if Mr. *Chubb* had held ſuch Doctrine, what a Devil would they make of him, for his powerful Dulneſs. Suppoſing God and the Devil both work Miracles, I apprehend that natural Reaſon can inform Men how to diſtinguiſh the one from the other; *viz.* by their Nature, Tendency, and Effects. The Devil's Miracles muſt diſcover themſelves by doing Miſchief to the Bodies and Properties of Men, and Acts of Violence tending to ſome ill End, as the ſetting up another Deity, teaching immoral Acts for religious Duties, or Doctrines deſtructive of Reaſon and Mankind, by introducing Wars, Tyranny, Ignorance, Perſecution, and all Miſchiefs injurious to civil Society. But ſuppoſe the Miracles wrought are a Mixture of Good and Evil, to whom then may they be aſcribed? If a Man cannot ſerve God and Mammon, and there be no Communion of Light with Darkneſs, if alſo God be abſolutely Good, they cannot be from him. And if the Devil could ſpeak Truth for an ill End, as in *Job*; or if he can transform himſelf into an Angel of Light, why may he not do Good that Evil may come? Since we believe Jeſus was ſent from God, and acted by his Authority in all he did for the Good of Men, *that he did no Sin, neither was Guile found in his Mouth*; that *he went about doing Good, to ſeek and to ſave thoſe that were loſt:* If any Works are ſaid to be done by him, which are Inſtances of Power, but not of Goodneſs, thoſe Stories muſt be looked upon as Forgery; therefore the Goſpel of our Saviour's Infancy is rejected, in which are many Wonders reported to be done by him in his Infancy, and ſome Things miſchievous: But, Sir, ſeeing the miraculous Works of the bleſſed Jeſus were all divinely Good, thoſe that were Witneſſes of them could not aſcribe them to the Devil. The Tree is known by its Fruit. If on this Account *his Fame went through all Syria* for the great and good

good Works that he wrought; if 'all the Country was alarmed 'with his Miracles, ſo that the 'Chief Prieſts could not be un-'acquainted with them, if many 'of his Miracles were performed 'in public Places of Reſort, in 'Preſence of the Scribes and 'Phariſees,' as the *Clearer* ſays, p. 37. How could they deſire of him a Sign from Heaven, when they had ſo many, and ſuch glaring Wonders had been done before them? And why did he anſwer that *no Sign ſhould be given them*, if he gave them ſo many? What need had they to fear any Thing, either as to his not being the Perſon they expected, or being unable to perform what they deſired? And how could ſome of them ſay he deceived the People, call him a Deceiver, and put him to Death, and in the manner they did, had his Miracles in doing Good been ſo well known; neither Prieſt nor Infidel would cry, *Crucify him, crucify him*, (which is the ſame as hang him, hang him,) in this Age, nor any other Age; for Men are in general the ſame in all Ages; they muſt needs think it weak, as well as wicked, to attempt to put to Death one whom they knew had Power to raiſe the Dead.

Sir, if the Enemies of Jeſus doubted the Reality of his Miracles, or believing them, were fooliſh enough to think they could be wrought by any other than the Power of God; they might imagine, if they had him in their Cuſtody, they ſhould have a Proof of his Ability, and ſo be convinced; or by putting him to Death, put an End to their own Fears of Mutiny, and Contentions on that Score. This only will account for their Actions towards him, and for deſpiſing his Pretenſions, as well as diſmiſſing all their Apprehenſions concerning him, or what his weak, diſperſed, and terrified Party, after his Death, were able to do with his dead Body.

If the Jews ſaw his Miracles, and ſometimes ſuſpected they might be from God, at other Times from the Devil; thoſe Miracles were not of that Sort as could certainly convince them *by what Authority he did thoſe Things*, but left them in as much Suſpenſe, as if he had not done any, and then all the great Works he wrought were to no Purpoſe, nor any true Sign of his Miſſion.

Sir, if the Story was then reported, that Jeſus had been in private Conference with the Devil forty Days, and ſome had ſeen them on the Pinacle of the Temple, it might give them a great Deal of Suſpicion that he had to do with the Devil, and was entered into Contract with him to cure Diſeaſes and caſt out Devils by Beelzebub; not to divide, but to eſtabliſh his Kingdom in the World. But the Story that gives Colour to ſuch an Inſinuation is ſo infamous, that it ought with Scorn to be torn out of the Goſpels, and excommunicated as apocryphal and heretical.

§. 14. *Remarks on ſome Particulars in the Clearer.*

As to my Examination of St. *John*, concerning Chriſt's foretelling his Reſurrection, the *Clearer* is by no Means willing to rely on it, and begs Leave to examine

for himſelf. Very well. To examine for one's Self is right. But has he found me in an Error? No: Then he confirms my Search.

What the *Clearer* finds in St. *John* which he ſuppoſes predicted Chriſt's Death, I paſs over, that being no Part of this Argument. He imagines the Reſurrection indicated in *John* xiv. 1, 2. 16, 18. xv. 16. 22. which he ſays were far from being delivered as Secrets. Though the Meaning of thoſe Words muſt needs have been a Secret then, if they are not ſo yet. He owns, (p. 58.) that 'The Diſciples themſelves little 'apprehended what Chriſt's dying and riſing again meant, 'thought it myſterious, and a 'Parable: They had been long 'accuſtomed to this Sort of Language, and had frequently been 'puzzled with it.' And elſewhere, 'When he was crucified, 'all their Hopes died with him; 'and when he was riſen again, 'they could ſcarce credit it.'

The *Clearer*'s Method of finding out the Senſe of Expreſſions, by applying one to another uttered at different Times and Occaſions, ſhews him to be in the utmoſt Diſtreſs.

He thinks that Prophecies may not be underſtood, till the Thing propheſied comes to paſs; but a Prophecy not underſtood, is underſtood to be no Prophecy.

The *Clearer* and the other Defenders ſuppoſe too, that the Evangeliſts were great Grammarians, and had a critical Knowledge of the *Greek* Tongue, or why do they reaſon ſo grammatically in ſeveral Places. A thouſand Suppoſitions not to be proved are not to the Purpoſe.

§. 15. *Of the Predictions of the Reſurrection.*

In my *Reſurrection of Jeſus conſidered*, it was obſerved, that it does not appear to be foretold, nor expected, for Reaſons which I ſhall now corroborate.

1. Becauſe what was ſaid to be given in public, was not underſtood to relate to it, nor fulfilled.

1*ſt*, As to Time; tho' much Pains has been taken to make out the Time from *Friday* Evening to *Sunday* Morning, anſwer to three Days and three Nights, the little I have ſaid will not convince them, and the great deal they have ſaid will not convince me. Mr. *Whiſton* ſays on this Subject, 'I cannot pretend, that two 'Nights alone are three Nights;' and therefore, he thinks the three Days and three Nights in *Matthew* xii. 40. a later Interpolation: And I think, Chriſt cannot be ſaid to riſe on the third Day, if he roſe before the third Day came. He laid in the Grave no Part of the third Day, nor the third Night: This Difficulty has no Doubt been a thouſand Times repeated, but never confuted, neither in the *TRIAL*, *the Evidence cleared*, nor any other, nor can be; therefore it would be loſt Time to take Notice of what has been ſaid, or ſay any more about it. But,

2*dly*. The Prediction ſays no Sign ſhould be given to that evil Generation, but that of *Jonah*; and yet neither the Sign, nor the Thing ſignified, was ever given to that evil Generation, who required it: But theſe Gentlemen can ſee no Promiſe of a Reſurrection

tion to *them* in this Sign, only of lying a certain Time in the Grave. But, ſays the *Clearer*, 'that 'Chriſt would appear to them in 'Perſon after his Reſurrection, 'there is not a Word about it.' Then it was no Sign at all to them; it ſignified only, that he ſhould, when dead, lie three Days in the Grave, and who doubted it: Well then, what did they expect, that he would afterwards riſe again; 'there is not a Word 'about it,' ſays he: What then were they afraid of? And why did they watch?

3*dly*, The Jews were told *no* Sign ſhould be given them, but that of the Prophet *Jonas*; whereas the *Clearer* ſays, he gave them many other Signs or Miracles, which if he did, this Sentence is not true, and if this Sentence be true, he gave them no Sign, but diſclaimed all miraculous Power; though if any Sign was given, why ſhould they demand another; and why did he not then refer them to thoſe Signs and Wonders he had given them? Or why not tell them of the Reſurrection of *Lazarus*, that was to be? If he intended to give them a Sign, why was not *Lazarus* rather given for a Sign to that Generation than *Jonas*, whom they know nothing of, but by Tradition? If *Lazarus* was fairly dead, and raiſed again to Life by divine Power, it could not have been prevented by their fore-knowing it: To have given them Notice of it at ſuch Time, when they called upon him for a Sign from Heaven, muſt have been a full and ſatisfactory Anſwer. All my Antagoniſts have paſſed over in Silence the Remarks I made on what followed the raiſing of *Lazarus*, in the *Reſurrection conſidered*, third Edition, page 28. That Affair is ſet in ſo true and converting a Light, that it dazzles their intereſted Optics.

The Prediction in *John* ii. 20. was not underſtood by any, therefore no Prediction; and when ſpoken, conveyed no ſuch Meaning to the Hearers, as his Reſurrection from the Dead.

II. The Predictions ſaid to be given in private were not underſtood to have any Signification of a real Reſurrection, but only as Parables, and dark Enigma's, therefore no Predictions.

1*ſt*, Becauſe 'tis confeſſed, the Diſciples did not underſtand the Words that were ſpoken, what riſing from the Dead meant; therefore they could not blab it to the High Prieſt and Phariſees, nor alarm them with what they were not alarmed of, nor expected. And thoſe that heard not his Prophecies, nor believed his Miracles, but were ever and anon calling for a Miracle, could not expect the riſing again of Jeſus after his Death.

But if a fraudulent Reſurrection was apprehended, as St. *Matthew* relates, and Mr. *Chandler* ſuppoſes, of the Diſciples making, and therefore they ſat a Watch, and a true one unexpectedly happened, 'tis not probable.

1*ſt*, Becauſe 'tis not credible that the Watchmen ſhould be almoſt killed by Miracles, and deny thoſe Miracles that had ſuch an Effect upon them.

2*dly*, Becauſe 'tis not credible that the Jew Rulers ſhould believe them, and hire the Soldiers to deny that Truth which they themſelves believed.

3*dly*, Becauſe 'tis not credible that the Rulers and Soldiers ſhould by ſo doing think to conceal the Conſequence of a true Reſurrection.

4*thly*, Becauſe 'tis confeſſed that Jeſus never appeared in public to any, but to his Diſciples only.

5*thly*, Becauſe the Accounts of the Appearances of Jeſus, even to his Diſciples, do not agree, nor can they make them agree, tho' they have racked their Inventions all manner of Ways, and would have their unauthorized Explanations paſs for Goſpel Authority.

6*thly*, I have to add, that the miraculous Circumſtances of the Reſurrection as related, and the Miracles ſaid to be done afterwards to prove it, do all want equal Proof as the Reſurrection itſelf.

§. 16. *The Defenders characterized.*

I wiſh, Sir, I could find any fair Arguments againſt theſe, in the Writings of any of my reverend Opponents, who 'tis likely may imagine they have ſaid ſomething which deſerves Regard: I wiſh I could with an honeſt Heart pay them a Compliment, that I find any of them produce better than the great *Clearer* himſelf, who has the Art of making Aſſertions and Suppoſitions look like Reaſon and Argument.

As for Mr. *Chandler*, I declare without Flattery or Envy, maugre all his Snarling, (tho' if he ſnarled leſs, he would write better) he is next to a Biſhop in his Way, greater than St. *Paul* for Learning, and almoſt like him, ſcarce behind the very Chiefeſt of the Apoſtles; with this Difference, St. *Paul* had a Thorn in the Fleſh, but he has a Thorn in the Spirit.

Reſpecting Mr. *Silveſter*, I am ſorry that any honeſt Man ſhould not ſee that Truth and Honeſty are nearly related: However, as he is a Churchman, and what he has wrote is for the Church, 'tis excuſable. He but modeſtly ſuppoſes Things, and hopes his Suppoſitions will be admitted to paſs for authentic:

But Mr. *Jackſon* does more; he aſſerts many Things, which would be Labour loſt for me to repeat, and himſelf to attempt to prove; it is much the ſhorter Method to aſſert all, than to prove any Thing. I expected better Things of ſo good an Author, but Men cannot make Bricks without Clay, whatever they may do without Straw. However, he aſſerts ſo boldly, one would almoſt think he had been one of the Witneſſes.

When Men are in palpable Diſtreſs, what can they do? Theſe brave Defendants do all that Men in their Circumſtances can. 'Tis not therefore the Fault of the Pleaders that the Cauſe is not cleared up; but the inexplicable Darkneſs that invelopes it. They want neither Underſtanding to brighten their own Side nor blacken the other.

§. 17. *Of ſpicing the Body of Jeſus, and other Circumſtances.*

The *Clearer* thinks, p. 70, 71. that the Diſciples ſpicing their Maſter's Body, is no Argument of their believing or not believing his Reſurrection. But were the *Clearer*'s Friends to offer to give him the extreme Unction at going to Bed, ſuppoſing his Religion allowed of that Ceremony,

he

he would think either that they did not expect him to riſe again, or that their Senſes were not ſo ſound as his Body.

The *Clearer* ſeems hardly to believe thoſe he calls the Witneſſes, who tell him the Diſciples did not expect the Reſurrection of their Maſter. But had they expected it, what need was there of this Coſt and Ceremony? Dead Bodies were ſpiced to preſerve them from ſtinking; I think there was no Fear of that in two Days, had they expected him to riſe the third. Or would the Power of the Reſurrection not have ſweetened it? *Martha* ſaid her Brother *Lazarus* had been dead four Days, and by this Time he ſtinketh; yet I ſuppoſe, he roſe ſweet enough. Why was not he ſpiced, but becauſe probably 'twas expected he ſhould riſe again. And why was the Body of Jeſus ſpiced, but becauſe the Diſciples confeſſed they had no Expectation of it. This plainly enough betrays their want of Faith and Foreknowledge of the Reſurrection of Jeſus.

If *Nicodemus*, who was a Ruler and a Diſciple, interred the Body with an hundred Pound Weight of Spices, its evident neither the Rulers nor Diſciples had any Notice of his riſing again from the Dead, and knew not any Prophecy concerning it; and plainly that they thought him dead to all Intents and Purpoſes, ſince they were ſo officious, when they had ſo little Time to do it, the Sabbath drawing on.

It appears, Sir, then, that the Chief Prieſts having never had any Information that Jeſus was to riſe again, nor ſeen any wonderful Thing done by him, tho' they deſired to ſee ſomething of that Sort which had been reported to them, they could have no Anxiety about his dead Body to occaſion them to ſet a Watch. As for the Diſciples, 'tis owned they had them in Contempt, and therefore could be under no Apprehenſion of their Power, or plotting to ſteal away the Body, and pretend it was riſen, or of making any Hand of it, if they did; for could the People believe he was riſen from the Grave, if they ſaw him not afterwards, who to them ſeemed not able to deliver himſelf from the Pains of Death, of the public ignominious Death of a Criminal. No Wonder this was *to the Jews a ſtumbling Block.*

Why could not the Jew Rulers ſet a Watch at the Sepulchre without aſking Leave of *Pilate?* Or why ſhould they deſire him to do that for them, which they were capable of doing for themſelves? Since it appears to me, that any private Perſon might have done this, or hired another, or ſome others to do it, unleſs they were afraid the Perſons ſo doing might be murdered in the Night, and therefore it was neceſſary for them to watch armed. If this was the Caſe, it is plain they were afraid of dark Villainy, not of the Appearance of Jeſus and Honeſty, and then a ſtrong Guard was neceſſary; then the more public, the more wonderful the Women did not hear of it, as the *Clearer* ſuggeſts, and then the greater Wonder the Guard ſhould all agree to ſpread about a falſe Report, contrary to their Knowledge; and the leſs Reaſon to ſuppoſe their ſleepy Story could be credited, or that one or two Angels in winding Sheets ſhould

frighten all and convert none. Not to mention the Angels going away when the Light came, as if they were afraid or aſhamed of being ſeen: Why was this done in the Dark? And why did Jeſus riſe before the Sun? Why did the Angels and the Soldiers run away at the Approach of Day? I wiſh, if true, they had not a Fellow-feeling, for there was no ſeeing in the Caſe. The Story is as Dark as the Night it was done in. 'You ſee, Sir, 'how this Demonſtration *for* the 'Goſpel-Evidence turns out.'

§. 18. *Of the Women Diſciples that attended the Sepulchre.*

To expoſe ſome Things is a ſufficient Anſwer. The *Clearer* inſinuates, that the Women who followed the Body from the Croſs to the Sepulchre, knew nothing what was done to it, for *Joſeph* and *Nicodemus* wrapt it in Linen, nor did they nor any one elſe vouchſafe to tell the Women, though they were thoſe who had ſubſiſted and attended Jeſus in his Preaching and Travels: Yet, as they never left the Corps till they ſaw it depoſited, they might undoubtedly have ſmelt an hundred Pound Weight of Spices. The *Clearer*, Sir, Queries whether it was ſufficient, and ſuppoſes, that 'the Funeral Ceremonies were 'reſerved to be performed after 'the Sabbath with more Spices, 'had not Providence prevented 'it by a more wonderful Event,' by the unbelieving Women Diſciples, who had buried their Faith with their Maſter, while the Faith of Infidel Prieſts grew out of his Grave, and would have had no other Evidence of his Reſurrection than what the Apoſtles gave them, if they had not watched the Sepulchre. 'This more won-'derful Event' neither the Men nor Women Diſciples expected; and though it is ſaid to be known to, and believed by the unbelieving Jew Rulers, *Nicodemus* the only Believer among the Rulers, did not believe it; for ſpicing the Body was a Sign of his Infidelity or Ignorance, not of his Faith or Knowledge. As for the Women, poor Creatures, the *Clearer* argues they were ignorant of every Thing, knew nothing of the Prediction, nor of *Nicodemus*'s ſpicing the Body, or that a Watch had been ſeen ſet, 'twas done 'while they were confined at 'home,' and reſted devoutly on the Sabbath, 'without ſtirring a-'broad,' or goſſipping, or aſking or hearing any News all that live-long Day; for neither 'the '*Roman* Governor nor the chief 'Prieſts thought it neceſſary to in-'form theſe poor Women;' nor could any one elſe, for they ſet a public Watch privately, the Women therefore could not know, for they were no Witches, nor were any of the Diſciples Conjurers enough to inform them of it; and being the Sabbath, no Body came near them, nor ſtirred out of Doors, but the Jew Rulers to beg the Body might be watched, and the Watchmen. Theſe Things being granted, 'I cannot appre-'hend how it was poſſible they 'ſhould know what was done at the 'Sepulchre;' therefore they went early in the Morning after the Sabbath was paſt, to pay their laſt Reſpects to it, by anointing and perfuming it, and conſulted about rolling away the Stone from the Sepulchre. And there-

fore

fore ‘ where is the Inconſiſtency ‘ of all this? Or how are theſe ‘ different Stories?’

’Tis ſaid, Sir, that the Women at the Sepulchre *mourned and wept*. Why ſhould they weep, if they knew he was to riſe again, and in ſo ſhort a Time? Had they known this, certainly they would have watched the Grave with eager Expectation and Joy. But they had forgot his Words, (*Luke* xxiv. 6, 7, 8.) till put in Mind of it by two ſhining Men at the Sepulchre. A likely Story! How could they forget at ſo remarkable a Time, ſuch repeated Aſſurances of the moſt amazing Action that ever was, and they his moſt intimate Friends, Acquaintance, and Believers in him?

§. 19. *Of the Effect the Apparition made to the Watch, had on them and the Prieſts.*

The *Clearer* ſays, ‘ that the ‘ Chief Prieſts well knew what ‘ Effect the Report of the Watch ‘ would naturally have on the ‘ Minds of the People, if fairly ‘ made.’ How could they know it, if it made none on them nor the Watch? And if it had an Effect on both the Watch and them, why does he only, in Contradiction to what I argued about it, endeavour to prove it had not? If it had an Effect, how could they think to prevent it by Means of thoſe very Men that had found it irreſiſtable. But tuſh, he inſinuates that was but ‘ a Fright,’ (p. 87, 88.) There is not the leaſt ‘ Reaſon to ſuſpect they were ac- ‘ quainted with the Character ‘ and Pretenſions of the Perſon ‘ lying in the Grave,’ though all Jeruſalem knew of it. ‘ They ‘ did not expect to be diſturbed ‘ by inviſible Powers.’ True; but if they were, and the inviſible Powers appeared viſible, it muſt have been the more ſurprizing. But after they had been ſo greatly diſturbed, that they became as dead Men, and had told it to the High Prieſt and Rulers, it affected them no more. Why? They were common Soldiers, and therefore not common Men; they were ſcared and terrified by a ſurprizing Sight, but unaffected with the Conſequences; and the Chief Prieſts too, though they were alarmed at it. The Soldiers, bribed by them with ready Money, reported what the Prieſts invented; who, though they admitted his Miracles, and were Witneſſes to ſome of them, ſo that (p. 61.) ‘ Whether they thought him to ‘ be the Chriſt or no, could not ‘ but ſuſpect him to be a great ‘ Prophet at leaſt;’ yet they aſcribed his Miracles to the Power of Beelzebub; and though they ſuſpected, ‘ He might poſſibly ‘ come from the Grave armed ‘ with Power to take Vengeance ‘ for their wicked and cruel ‘ Treatment of him,’ yet ‘ Might ‘ aſcribe all the Guards reported ‘ to be done at the Sepulchre to ‘ the Power of the Devil:’ *Supra quam cuique credibile eſt.* ’Prieſts and Infidels, or Infidel Prieſts, have generally more Senſe than to believe ſo much in the Devil.

The *Clearer* thinks it proper that neither the Watch, the Angels, nor the Prieſts, ſhould be Witneſſes of the Reſurrection, p. 91. but ſuch choſen Witneſſes to convince the World, as the World would not chuſe of all Men, intereſted

tereſted in the Caſe, whoſe Honeſty was ſuſpected, and judged to require a ſtrict Watch, leſt they ſhould be guilty of foul Play. But though the High Prieſt and Rulers knew the Diſciples, and we not, we can confide in the Integrity of the Diſciples, though they could not, whereby our Faith is approved: Thus we being ſpiritually begotten, and their Offſpring thro' Faith by a lineal Deſcent, we go to Heaven in a right Line.

§. 20. *Remarks on Mr.* Chandler's *Aſſertions*

Mr. *Chandler* (p. 8, and 9.) aſſures us, that the 'Predictions of 'Chriſt to his Diſciples of his 'Sufferings and Reſurrection, as 'to the Senſe and Meaning of 'them, were too clear to be miſ-'underſtood;' and p. 10. 'they 'underſtood the Meaning of theſe 'Expreſſions perfectly well;' tho' the Evangeliſts ſay the Diſciples did *not* underſtand them, *Mark* ix. 10. 32. as alſo appears by their Actions: But he preſumes, that they did not underſtand how the Meſſiah was to ſuffer and riſe again, and yet they underſtood Jeſus to be the Meſſiah, and the Senſe of what he told them about it, very well. If they did underſtand his Words, why did they not believe, and expect the fulfilling them? If they did not underſtand how the Meſſiah was to ſuffer, why did he not open their Underſtandings? Without which, whatever he taught them, they learnt nothing. Why did he, who was called, *the Light of the World*, find and leave them in the Dark. He calls *them* the Light of the World, *Matt.* v. 14. and yet they groped in Darkneſs. Jeſus ſaid, *All that ever came before me were Thieves and Robbers*, John x. 8. ſo are all that have been after him, for they have ſtole away our Light. Their Prejudices, ſay theſe Pleaders, darkened their Minds; ſtrange! That the Light of God which came down from Heaven being with them, could not, or did not remove thoſe Prejudices! That God ſhould not enlighten his own People, nor Chriſt his Diſciples, is a very dark Story.

Mr. *C.* adds, that, 'if they were not ſatisfied, 'twas becauſe 'they demand unreaſonable Satiſ-'faction:' This is an unreaſonable Aſſertion; for what is more reaſonable, than ſuch Proof of the Truth of a Fact, as the Nature of it could and ought to give; and p. 19. 'Suppoſing they were 'an evil, adulterous, profligate, 'hypocritical, perſecuting, bi-'gotted Generation, how was it 'poſſible to ſatisfy them?' ſays he. Were they too bad to be made good? Or were they to have the leſs Motives to make them ſo, in Proportion as they were the more wicked? Or, ſuppoſe Men are unreaſonably bad, are not reaſonable Methods therefore to be uſed to make them better? You know, Sir, let Men be ever ſo bad, they nevertheleſs believe their own Eyes. Had Jeſus perſonally and publicly appeared to them after his Reſurrection, as before, the Trouble of after Miracles might have been ſpared, and the Holy Ghoſt might have ſtaid in Heaven. If a Miracle be neceſſary at all to confirm it, 'tis now; but then it required no other

other than a perſonal Manifeſtation.

It would be loſt Time, Sir, particularly to ſhew how greatly Mr. *C.* affirms and ſuggeſts, and how little he proves, like the other Gentlemen in this unbloody War; they make deſperate Attacks, but ſhameful Retreats. Arguments founded merely on imagination, are but imaginary Arguments: Suppoſitions are fit Anſwers to Suppoſitions; and Aſſertions to Aſſertions; which may be done without End.

§. 21. *Whether the Watch were credible Evidence in Favour of the Reſurrection?*

Sir, If the Jew Rulers found it neceſſary Policy to bribe the Soldiers to report a Lye, and did it; if they could bribe them to deny what they had affirmed, the Rulers had little Reaſon to believe their former Affirmations; but might reaſonably conclude, that thoſe mercenary Rogues had been before-hand hired by the Diſciples to lye to them, as they had hired them to lye to the People. If they did not ſcruple lying for a Bribe in one Caſe, they would do the ſame in the other; for either Side was equal to them. They that can aſſert any Thing for a Bribe, and thoſe who ſay and unſay, prove nothing: What is an equal Proof to both Sides, is a Proof to neither. If they could be bribed to lye at all; there is the leſs Reaſon to believe any Thing they reported; they are a perjured Evidence, and not to be credited in any Reſpect, or for any Party. Thus, ſuppoſing there was a Watch, as pretended, they prove nothing in Favour of the Reſurrection; becauſe, if they were liable to be corrupted by the Prieſts, they might have been alſo corrupted by the Diſciples. Or, who knows but the hundred Pound Weight of Spices might allure them to remove the Body in the Dark; if that was not enough, *an Angel* a-piece might induce them to run away, and let the Diſciples do what they pleaſed with it. What Certainty have we, ſuppoſing there was a Watch, that it was not ſo? Or that Countenance and Encouragement was not given to this angelic Story by *Pilate?*

§. 22. *Of the Sufficiency of Goſpel Evidence, and my Errors.*

I aſked, Why do the Evangeliſts tell different Stories? 'What 'do you mean? ſays the *Clearer*, 'St. *Matthew* alone tells the Sto-'ry of guarding the Sepulchre, 'the reſt are quite ſilent in that 'Point, but ſay nothing that is 'inconſiſtent with it.' The Inconſiſtency I have already ſhewn. 'St. *Matthew* alone tells the 'Story of watching the Sepul-'chre, the reſt are quite ſilent a-'bout it;' what, not one Word by the others, but of Facts that cannot at all ſtand with it? Why did not *Matthew* mention what the Women came for to roll away the Stone, and ſpice the Body? No; 'twas not agreeable to the Story of the Watch. That the Goſpel Evidence may be as remarkable as the Goſpel Facts, one Witneſs unknown and abſent, muſt be ſufficient in uncommon Caſes; but common Caſes in Law require at leaſt two living Witneſſes

Witneſſes preſent to eſtabliſh the Truth; for the Goſpel is founded on Faith, but the Law on Reaſon.

All the *Conſiderer*'s Reaſons are to be eſteemed of no Weight: Why? Becauſe, ſays Mr. *Jackſon*, he blunders, and miſtakes one Man for another, and one Woman for another. Well, I am convinced of theſe two Errors, and make a public Recantation: 1*ſt*, I mentioned that *Agrippa*, which ſhould have been *Feſtus*, told *Paul* he was mad, p. 71. of the 2d Edition, line 30. 'tis eaſily mended, for *he* read *Feſtus*; but what is this to the Argument? And p. 35, for *Mary* the Mother of Jeſus, read *Joſes*; and p. 36. for Jeſus's own Mother, read the Mother of *Joſes*; for 'tis a Queſtion, whether we may not reckon the Mother of Jeſus among his Brethren, *Matth.* xii. 47, 48, 49. *John* vii. 3, 4, 5. and one of his own Kindred, and his own Houſe, *Mark* v. 4. for it ſeems he had little to do with his own Mother, *John* ii. 4.

§. 23. *Of the Defenders attempts to reconcile the Appearances of Chriſt.*

All the four Gentlemen agree to affirm, that there is no Inconſiſtency at all in the Relation of the Appearances of Chriſt in the four Goſpels; yet, Sir, there is no Agreement among them and the Goſpels, nor among one another in making them conſiſtent.

Mr. *Chandler* ſays (p. 79.) that "*Grotius* and moſt other Interpreters make this Appearance of Chriſt to *Mary Magdalene*, mentioned by St. *John*, the ſame with that to the Women mentioned by St. *Matthew*, and think, that the Appearance of the Angel mentioned by *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*, which was made to the Women in common, was alſo the ſame as that which St. *John* mentions as made to *Mary Magdalene*." But Mr. *C.* being full of himſelf, thinks there is the *fulleſt Evidence* to the contrary; if ſo, 'tis ſurprizing that others could not, as well as himſelf, diſtinguiſh by the *fulleſt* Evidence: But if he means, that in ſuch Light there is the fulleſt Evidence, that the Story does not harmonize, it may be true. 'What then is to be done 'in this Diſtreſs,' but to ſuppoſe them two diſtinct Appearances, to reconcile the Inconſiſtencies that attend their being one Appearance. It is to be obſerved, Sir,

1*ſt*, That they have no Authority for doing this, but the Neceſſity they are under to reconcile the Differences, that ariſe from their being conſidered as one Appearance.

2*dly*, That conſidering them as two diſtinct Appearances does not reconcile the Differences.

3*dly*, That though they affirm nothing more than that they are conſiſtent in every Part, they prove nothing leſs.

But the *great Clearer* has endeavoured to reconcile the Differences in one Appearance, (if I underſtand him aright) though his great Patron ſuppoſed two to *Mary Magdalene*.

§. 24. *Mr.* Sylveſter's *Account of the Appearances of Jeſus compared with the Evangeliſts.*

I ſhall mention Mr. *Sylveſter* next, becauſe the others ſeem to have followed him, with ſome Variation

Variation where they are crampt, to make it, as they think, more conſiſtent, they fall under a Neceſſity, as Men Shipwrackt, each to ſhift for himſelf. Mr. *T. S.* from *Lucas Burgenſis*, delivers it thus, p. 63, 64.

1. 'When the Women ſaw the 'Body was gone, and had ſeen 'the Viſion of Angels, who ſaid 'that he was alive, and com-'municated it to the Diſciples;

2. 'Then ran *Peter* and *John* 'quickly to the Sepulchre, and 'not finding the Body of Jeſus, 'returned home aſtoniſhed, *Luke* 'xxiv. 12. *John* xx. 3.

3. '*Mary Magdalene* returning 'to the Sepulchre, and continu-'ing there weeping, had the 'Honour of the firſt Appearance 'from our Lord, *Mark* x. 9. *John* 'xx. 11.

4. 'When ſhe had communi-'cated this to the other Women, 'and was going together with 'them to the Apoſtles, to ſignify 'what had happened, Jeſus met 'them, appearing to them all, '*Matth.* xxviii. 9.

5. 'During this, after the Ap-'pearance of the Angels to the 'Soldiers, who were appointed 'for the Watch, being bribed, 'they went into the City, and re-'ported, that the Diſciples came 'by Night, and ſtole the Body of 'Jeſus away, *Mat.* xxviii. 4. 11.

6. 'The Women giving Te-'ſtimony that Jeſus was alive, 'and the Apoſtles being incredu-'lous, he appeared then to *Peter*, '*Luke* xxiv. 34.

7. 'Afterwards he appeared 'to the two Diſciples going to '*Emmaus*, *Luke* xxiv. 13. *Mark* 'xvi. 12.

8. 'And then on the Evening 'of the firſt Day of the Week, 'that is, the Lord's Day, he ap-'peared to all the Apoſtles toge-'ther, *Thomas* alone being abſent, '*Mark* xvi. 14. *Luke* xxiv. 36. '*John* xx. 19.

9. '*Thomas* remaining incre-'dulous to the Report of the Diſ-'ciples, Jeſus preſented himſelf 'before them all, to be ſeen and 'felt on the eighth Day after, '*John* xx. 24.

10. 'Afterwards the Diſciples 'repairing to *Galilee*, as they 'were commanded, they ſaw Je-'ſus at the Sea of *Tiberias*, and 'there he dined with them, *John* 'xxi. 1.

11. 'And afterwards he was 'ſeen by a great Number on the 'Mount, *Matth.* xxviii. 16.

12. 'So then after the Com-'pletion of forty Days, in which 'he converſed with his Diſciples, 'ſpeaking to them the Things 'that concern the Kingdom of 'God, on the fortieth Day, while 'they beheld he aſcended into 'Heaven, *Mark* xvi. 19. *Luke* 'xxiv. 5. *Acts* i. 3.'

Againſt this, Sir, I have theſe Objections.

That the Women went and found the Body was gone, came and told *Peter* and *John*, and went again with them, and ſaw Jeſus in their ſecond Return, is not agreeable to any evangelical Account. *Matthew* ſays, in their Return from thence the firſt Time, they met Jeſus by the Way. It muſt be the firſt Time, becauſe they carried Spices with them.

If they went twice to the Sepulchre, and ſaw Angels at the firſt Time, who told them, that Jeſus was alive, why did they not tell it to *Peter* and *John*? And if they

they did, why does not *John* mention it? But on the contrary, that they ſaid, they have taken the Lord out of the Sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. This, ſays Mr. *C.* is only a Rehearſal of what ſhe ſaid to the Angel; but no Angel told him ſo: And why did ſhe or *John* tell one Part of the Story, and not the other?

If the Soldiers were but going into the City, when the Women were the laſt Time going to tell the Diſciples, certainly they muſt have ſeen them at the Sepulchre the firſt Time; but that they could not do, for the Soldiers fled at the opening the Sepulchre, and *Mary Magdalene* with the Women came the firſt Time after it was opened.

Where was Jeſus gone, that he did not appear to *Peter* and *John* at the Sepulchre, yet muſt of Neceſſity be there but a little before, and was there afterwards? So were the Angels, yet *Peter* and *John* ſaw them not, neither in the Sepulchre nor out of it.

§. 25. *The Manner of the firſt Appearance to Mary Magdalene, according to the* Clearer.

The *Clearer* differs from *Lucas Brugenſis*, in that he conceives theſe two Appearances are one, and ſays *Mary Magdalene* was only mentioned as being the Principal, and that ſhe ſaw Jeſus after going the ſecond Time to the Sepulchre with the Women, (which *Matthew* ſays was in their firſt Return.) By this Accommodation of the Appearance, *ſtanding* and *going*, *at* the Sepulchre, and *at a Diſtance* from it, are the ſame Thing. The *Clearer* ſays, Jeſus forbad them to touch his Body, after they had touched him. 'If *Mary* had not 'laid hold of Jeſus's Feet, he 'could have no Occaſion to ſay, '*Touch me not.*' Thus he alone attempts to reconcile the Accounts in one Appearance. To do him Juſtice, as after all, he does not conceal his Diffidence of the Truth according to his Explanation; ſo I will not conceal his Modeſty. 'Upon the whole '(ſays he) I think the Account 'here given ſeems to me to be 'the moſt probable, which I 'would be underſtood to ſay 'without Prejudice to other In'terpretations, which many wor'thy and learned Writers have 'followed.'

§. 26. *The Hiſtory of Chriſt's Appearance to Mary Magdalene according to Mr.* Chandler.

But Mr. *Chandler* will have it, that *Mary Magdalene* in one Journey to the Sepulchre ſaw Jeſus twice, once alone, according to St. *John*, and once with her Companions, according to St. *Matthew*. And (p. 83, 84.) that 'They afterwards came to *Peter* 'and *John*, and that *Mary Mag*'dalene told them ſhe had a Meſ'ſage from Chriſt to them all: 'That the two Apoſtles gathered 'the reſt together, with *Mary* '*Magdalene* and the other Wo'men; ſhe related to them the 'ſeveral Appearances as they 'happened in Order, who had a 'greater Command of her Spi'rits, and was able calmly to 'give them the important Rela'tion, who heard all without be'lieving any Thing. It does 'not appear (adds he) from this

Account,

'Account, that *Mary Magdalene* 'ran back and told the Diſciples 'what ſhe had ſeen at the Sepul-'chre, and then returned to it 'and ſaw Jeſus.—(p. 84.) 'Tis 'abſolutely improbable.' (p. 86, 87.) *Mark* and *John* ſpeak of 'the firſt Appearance of Chriſt 'to *Mary* and the reſt of her Com-'panions, as they were at a Diſ-'tance from the Sepulchre, and 'haſtening home to make their 'Report to the Apoſtles.—— (p. 79.) 'Either *Mary Magdalene* 'did not flee at all from it, (*i. e.* 'the Sepulchre) or immediately 'returned to it.'—p. 88.) 'Tho' 'St. *John* mentions *Mary Mag-dalene*'s running to *Peter* imme-'diately after the Account that 'ſhe ſaw the Stone taken from 'the Sepulchre, yet St. *John* ne-'ver gives the leaſt Intimation 'that *Mary Magdalene* returned 'back to the Sepulchre; but af-'ter the Series of the Hiſtory had 'been interrupted by the Rela-'tion of *Peter* and *John*'s run-'ning to the Sepulchre, he re-'ſumes it again, and connects it 'by a Word that plainly ſhews 'it to be a Continuance of the 'foregoing Narration.' Thus by Interpolations theſe holy Writ-ings are defended againſt any In-terpolations, and the Story is ju-ſtified from being a Blunder by making the Story-tellers Blun-derers.

§. 27. *Mr.* Jackſon's *Relation of the Appearance of Jeſus to* Mary Magdalene.

Mr. *Jackſon*'s Goſpel of the Reſurrection, p. 124, 125, 126, differs from Mr. *Sylveſter*'s and the reſt, of which this is the Sub-ſtance: *Mary Magdalene* with the other Women go to the Sepul-chre, and find not the Body; *Mary Magdalene* leaves them, and runs to tell *Peter* and *John*; the other Women ſtay and ſee An-gels; they go to tell the Diſci-ples; when they are gone, come *Peter* and *John*; *Mary Magdalene* follows; the Men examine the Sepulchre, and go home; *Mary Magdalene* ſtays, ſees Angels and Jeſus; ſhe runs to tell the Diſci-ples of it; after this Jeſus appear-ed to the other Women alſo by the Way, that were gone before, and ſuffered them to lay hold of his Feet, though he would not permit *Mary Magdalene* to touch him.

§. 28. *Remarks on the Expoſitions of theſe Goſpel-defenders.*

Thus, Sir, theſe Gentlemen have tried all manner of Ways to make the Story conſiſtent, though every one of them aſſert there is no Inconſiſtency in the ſeveral Ac-counts of the Evangeliſts; yet in endeavouring to make them a-gree, the Goſpels of the Reſur-rection of the *Clearer*, of Mr. *Sylveſter*, of Mr. *Chandler*, and of Mr. *Jackſon*, differ as much as *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke* and *John*. *Nulli duo concinnunt.* Their Un-derſtanding it ſo differently ſhews it is above *their* Underſtanding as well as mine; yet every one ſeems ſure his own is right; and if it be, I am ſure no Man knows which to take, or refuſe. But a-bove all that are ſure, as Mr. *Jackſon* expreſſes it, p. 139, that 'There is no Contradiction nor 'Inconſiſtencies in the ſeveral 'Accounts of Chriſt's Reſurrec-tion,

'tion, nor any other Difference 'but one Evangeliſt omits ſome 'Circumſtances which are relat-'ed in others:' I ſay, above all the reſt I recommend you, Sir, to Mr. *Chandler*, if Poſitiveneſs be a Proof of being in the right, he is poſitively the Man. And to compleat the Jeſt, he pretends to ſcrape Acquaintance with *Honeſty*, whom you may believe him acquainted with, if he is ſo weak in Judgment as to be ſtrong in Faith. He ſays, p. 86. 'Upon the 'whole, as the ſeveral Accounts 'are fairly capable of being re-'conciled without any unnatural 'Suppoſitions and forced Con-'ſtructions upon the plain Letter 'of the Words, and the Intima-'tions dropt by one or other of 'the Hiſtorians themſelves; I 'am forced as an *honeſt Man*, 'and a Lover of Juſtice, to bring 'in my Verdict in Favour of theſe 'Witneſſes, and declare them 'fully conſiſtent.' P. 80. 'So 'that comparing theſe ſeveral 'Accounts, we have the whole 'Hiſtory of this important Event 'compleat, and every Part of it 'is a Confirmation of the Whole.' P. 82. 'So that the Teſtimony 'of the Evangeliſts in their dif-'ferent Narrations is perfectly 'conſiſtent.' P. 92. ''Tis not 'Neceſſity, any other than that 'irreſiſtable Neceſſity of Fact, 'and the ſtrongeſt Circumſtan-'ces, that drives us to aſſert two 'Appearances, which removes 'all Abſurdity from the Account, 'and juſtifies the Whole, with-'out receding one Tittle from 'the Letter of the Hiſtory, &c.'

To affirm at this Rate, after ſuch Tranſpoſitions, Interpolations, and Conſtructions, which he is forced to make Uſe of, to make it in any tolerable manner hang together, and accord, is intolerable, and ſhews that *Modeſty* is an utter Stranger to him. I wiſh he had better Acquaintance with that polite Lady, and was more in Favour with her Grace.

If ſuch dividing and tacking of the Evangeliſts together, as all theſe Gentlemen are forced to contrive to make Diſcord look like Concord, was done to make them diſagree, what would Chriſtian Preachers and Believers think and ſay, or rather what would they not ſay to expoſe and reproach ſuch male Practice. Though the *Clearer* ſays, 'All the Evidence 'is on the Side of the Reſurrec-'tion,' 'tis evident they find it very difficult to bring them all on one Side, and that the Methods they are obliged to take, ſhews them reduced to the greateſt Diſtreſs. What does all theſe Contrivances demonſtrate, but the palpable Patchwork of an ill connected Story, to make the beſt of it. They tell us, St. *John* wrote his Goſpel to correct the Defects of the others: Certainly they were very defective, and his Correction very incorrect. 'Tis confeſſing the Evangeliſts told their Story by Halves, and ſo badly, that if they had not the Holy Ghoſt to direct them, no Body ſtood in more Need of it; no is there leſs Need of him now to inform us what they mean, than was at firſt to teach them what he meant. If they had learned their Leſſon right, they certainly would have taught us better; but their Blundering ſhews their Honeſty: Though the

the Holy Ghoſt may pardon an honeſt Blunderer, yet ſure he would never chuſe to ſend ſuch of an Errand. To make up their Defects, theſe Gentlemen give us for Goſpel their own Conjectures, for which there is no Authority, the pure Offspring of Invention and Neceſſity to make the Accounts correſpond, which yet fail in doing. But ſuch mangling and cobling of the Text ſhews manifeſt Confuſion and egregious Blunders, not eaſy to make on the Side of Truth and Underſtanding, nor eaſy to reconcile with it. And it ſeems very unreaſonable, that the worſt Story-tellers ſhould demand the beſt Credit, and that on the ſevereſt Penalties. This, Sir, to me is a Demonſtration of the Badneſs of the Story, that it needs ſuch Penalties to make it paſs; for the moſt ſhining Truth is always attended with the cleareſt Evidence, and Virtue is wholly without Compulſion, 'tis the beſt natured Thing in the World. Truth and Virtue go Hand in Hand, always attended by Freedom; but Error dwells with Confuſion, Vice and Compulſion.

Though every one knows, that Stories which do not agree, cannot be all true, yet they do not conſider, that 'tis more likely they may be all falſe; and that many that do agree, are alſo falſe; therefore the Agreement of Stories is no Proof of the Truth of them; and if Probability be abſent, it ſhews Proof is wanting. Improbable Hiſtories that rightly tally, prove the fact no more, than a falſe Story, often repeated by one Perſon, or told by ſeveral, prove it to be true.

§. 29. *The Harmony of the Goſpel Defenders.*

Having ſhewn, Sir, how each of theſe Gentlemen endeavour to ſtate the Account of Chriſt's firſt Appearance, to make the Evidence agree, and what Agreement is between them and the Evidence, I now come to ſhew, how in endeavouring to remove all Diſagreements they agree one with another.

I hope, Sir, that you now clearly ſee, that there is ſuch Agreement in the Goſpel, and Goſpel Expounders and Defenders, that whether the firſt Appearance of Chriſt after his Reſurrection was to *Mary* alone, according to St. *John*, Mr. *Sylveſter*, p. 65. Mr. *Chandler*, p. 78, 79. and Mr. *Jackſon*, p. 126. or to her in Company with other Women, as St. *Matthew* and the *Clearer* ſay, in Contradiction to St. *John* and the reſt; both are conſiſtent, and agreeable to them and the Text. Whether *Mary* touched not Jeſus's Feet at firſt, but embraced them afterwards, as Mr. *Sylveſter* has it; or whether ſhe and the Women embraced them, and were forbidden at the ſame Time, as the *Clearer* ſays, p. 114; or that *Mary* was not forbad at all, and that 'there is no Reaſon to think 'it,' as Mr. *C.* p. 89, ſays; and that ſhe was forbid, and did not touch him at all, as Mr. *Jackſon* ſays, p. 126. Is either Way intirely conſiſtent? Whether *Mary Magdalene* went with other Women to the Sepulchre, and afterwards came and told *Peter* and *John*, and left the other Women

behind, as Mr. *Jackſon* ſays; or whether they went away, and left her behind, or went a little Way with them, and then returned alone, and afterwards joined them, as Mr. *Chandler* ſays; or whether they all went together, as ſay Mr. *Silveſter* and the *Clearer*, is all concordant and conſiſtent? Whether *Mary Magdalene*, with the Women, reported to the Apoſtles they had ſeen Angels and Jeſus Chriſt, as St. *Matthew* and Mr. *C.* ſays, (p. 85.) or that they reported not a Word about it, only that the Body was gone, as St. *John* and the *Clearer* relate, (p. 105.) is perfectly natural and harmonious? So, whether *Mary* ſaw Chriſt after *Peter* and *John* went to the Sepulchre, as St. *John* and the *Clearer* and Mr. *Jackſon* relate? Or whether ſhe ſaw him at the Sepulchre before *Peter* and *John* went there, as Mr. *C.* places it, 'I am forced, as an honeſt 'Man, and a Lover of Juſtice, 'to bring in my Verdict in Fa'vour of theſe Jurymen, and 'declare them fully conſiſtent.' That St. *Mark* and St. *John* ſpeak of one Appearance to *Mary Magdalene* alone, ſtanding by the Sepulchre, and *Matthew* of another to her and her Companions, going away, and at a Diſtance from it, as they were haſtening Home, as Mr. *C.* has it, (p. 86, 87.) or that it was but one Appearance in all to *Mary Magdalene* and her Companions, as the *Clearer* ſuppoſes; and therefore ſtanding or running, being at the Sepulchre or at a Diſtance from it, by herſelf or in Company, to make *Matthew* and *John* agree, is all one; nor is there any manner of Contradiction in it, nor in their Contradictions, which laſt is as true as all the reſt.

§. 30. *Remarks on attempting to reconcile irreconcileable Hiſtory.*

Is it, Sir, a Proof of the Hiſtory, and its Conſiſtency, that every Interpreter differs about the Senſe of it, and to bring it out of Confuſion confounds it, and is confounded? Is it, Sir, a fair Repreſentation of the Senſe and Criterion of the Veracity of it, that not two of thoſe who ſwear to the Truth of it, can agree about the Meaning, nor in what Senſe to repreſent it? If the Evangeliſts don't agree in what they tell, I ſee no Reaſon, that Men ſhould therefore ſuggeſt, they tell what they don't. What would, or might be ſaid to thoſe, that ſhould thus mangle and diſtort a Hiſtory, to make it contradict itſelf, I think may be ſaid to thoſe, that by ſuch Means endeavour to take away theſe Contradictions that are in it. Sir, I do not ſee, that Truth indulges Believers to new coin the Face of Faith, to preſerve its Currency, more than it does others to falſify it; nor to ſtrain the Senſe of *Greek* Words, or *Engliſh* Sentences, to a Senſe unthought of before, to help them out at a dead Lift. Have the Evangeliſts expreſſed their own Senſe clear and right, how can the Expoſitors do it better? Have the Goſpel Hiſtorians expreſſed themſelves in ſuch manner, that Men cannot agree what their Senſe is? 'Tis not in their Power to clear it up: This one Thing is clear from hence, that the Believers and Defenders are greatly in the Dark, and nothing diſcovers

diſcovers it more, than their affirming that to be true, which they know nothing of, and aſſerting thoſe Things to be right, which their own Ignorance of is a Demonſtration, that ſuch Aſſertions are manifeſtly wrong. If it cannot be known, let it remain doubtful, or a Thing indifferent: If it be not right, why ſhould Men endeavour to make it appear ſo? If the Honeſty of the Hiſtorians in relating, was equal to their Underſtanding in expreſſing, what Men cannot agree about, I leave it to their Defenders to conſider, what Credit they deſerve. If they had the Holy Ghoſt to bring all Things to their Remembrance, and the Gift of Tongues to expreſs them, 'tis very ſtrange, they knew not how to agree together to tell a conſiſtent Story: If they ſay they had theſe Helps, and there appears plainly their want of them, they can obtain Credit with none but the Credulous. Sir, it is my Opinion, that the Apoſtles, on whom theſe Things are fathered, were innocent of the Matter; but others have done it in their Names. What mended their Hearts and Tongues muſt have mended their Intellects, and better directed their Pens: If there is no Proof of the Latter, there is no Reaſon to believe the Former; for the more of the one is aſcribed to them, and the leſs Appearance there is of the other, the more (Tinker like) in mending, it mars the Metal.

§. 31. *Of the next Appearance, and other Circumſtances.*

The *Clearer* thinks Chriſt had no Occaſion to mention his Intention to ſee them that Night in *Jeruſalem*, (p. 122.) but I cannot help thinking, it had been better for him to have mentioned this firſt, and in that Viſit, he had an Opportunity to tell them of his Pleaſure to ſee them in *Galilee*; for if the laſt was firſt, and only mentioned, without doubt it would have ſet the Diſciples on making the beſt of their Way thither immediately, by which Means they would have loſt the Pleaſure and Opportunity of ſeeing him in *Jeruſalem*; ſo his moſt faithful Diſciples would have been worſt treated, as being by their Faith and Obedience moſt likely to be moſt diſappointed of the Advantage given to others, who unexpectedly ſaw him at *Jeruſalem*. But notwithſtanding the Meſſage pretended to be given by the Angels and himſelf, they were in no haſte to go there: And why ſhould he trudge them there and back again, when it don't appear, he went or came with them. He could have ſkimmed thro' the Air to ſee his Diſciples there, when they, 'tis likely, were forced to trudge it all the Way on Foot. According to St. *Luke*, he never went to *Galilee*, but aſcended the Evening of the Day he aroſe: To get off from this Dilemma, they ſay nothing but what is monſtrouſly abſurd. Mr. *Chandler* has it, p. 112. 'That the Account of the Appearance to the 'Apoſtles, and what belongs to it, 'ends at ver. 43. and the 44th 'verſe, *And he ſaid unto them*,' or, as he renders it, 'moreover he 'ſaid unto them, relate to an 'Appearance forty Days after,' to reconcile it with *Acts* i. 4. which nothing but a Spirit of Di-

vination could have found out: A notable Diſcovery! This is a Revelation indeed! Alas, Sir, what does not Neceſſity drive Men to! The *Clearer* ſays, p. 132. 'The Orders to go to *Galilee*, and 'continue at *Jeruſalem*, were gi-'ven at different Times;' yes, the Order in the Morning bade them go to *Galilee*, but in the Evening of the ſame Day, if St. *Luke* writes like honeſt Men that are no Saints, they were (ver. 49.) ordered to tarry at *Jeruſalem*, by that Time Jeſus had changed his Mind, and inſtead of going to *Galilee*, took the open Road thro' the Air, from Mount *Olivet* to Heaven.

The Gentlemen take much Pains to explain the Meaning of thoſe Words concerning the Appearance of Jeſus to the two Diſciples travelling to *Emmaus*, *he appeared in another Form*, *their Eyes were holden that they ſhould not know him*, and *he vaniſhed out of Sight*; in doing which they do not well agree: But by what they ſay, 'tis plain, all the Interpretation which can be given it, is but gueſſing at the Meaning, and endeavouring to account for it, as well as they can. And to follow their Pattern, he that gueſſes what is moſt probable, and fartheſt off from Miracle, ſeems to come neareſt the Mark. So that Miracles are only to be allowed in Caſes of Neceſſity; but he does beſt, who can do without them.

The Gentlemen are very careful to convince me of my Error, that *Simon Peter* was not the other Diſciple that went with *Cleopas* to *Emmaus*; but this Care is of no Moment; 'twas but a mere Suppoſition or Conjecture of mine, and delivered as ſuch; at the Overthrow of which they ſeem to glory, as if they had obtained ſome Sort of Victory: But what, pray, does it ſignify to the Argument, whether it was *Simon Peter* with *Cleopas*, that knew Chriſt very well, or ſomebody, that no Body knows not ſo much as his bare Name; and who perhaps, as Mr. *C.* ſuppoſes, (p. 97.) was not ſo well acquainted with his Manner, Perſon, and Voice, and might, for aught we know, as little know Chriſt, as we know him, or *Cleopas*, of whom we know no more than the Name of one of them. If the *Cleopas* here mentioned, be that *Cleopas* which *Mary* is called the Wife of, *John* xix. 25. who ſaw Jeſus crucified, and was with *Mary Magdalene*, we know nothing more of him; therefore 'tis to little Purpoſe to tell us of this Appearance: For if theſe two were thoſe that knew Jeſus very well, the Account is the more unaccountable, that they ſhould not know him, when riſen; but if they had little Knowledge of him, or we of them, their Evidence is of ſo much the leſs Weight. But whether they were both worth naming or not, (as it ſeems one of them was not) 'tis not to be accounted for by me, that Jeſus ſhould ſpend his Time in a private Appearance with thoſe on the public Road, when the eleven Principals had not yet ſeen him, nor knew whether he was moved off alive or dead, all the Day long, and wanted to have their Underſtandings opened by the Reſurrection, which were not opened by the Prediction of it, ſave only,

'tis

'tis ſaid, he appeared to *Peter*; but of this Appearance 'tis very remarkable, that there is nothing remarkable in it, not ſo much as when, where, in what manner, or on what Account this private Appearance to *Peter* was made, and what makes it more ſo, tho' he had appeared to *Peter*, one of the Eleven, and two of the peripatetic Diſciples came to the Apoſtles, and heard them talking about it, and ſaying the Lord is riſen indeed, and has appeared to *Simon*, (which my Gentlemen ſay is *Peter*) and though they told the Eleven themſelves, what they knew of his Appearance to them, yet, ſays St. *Mark*, they did not believe them, (ver. 13.) nay, they could hardly believe Chriſt himſelf, St. *Luke* ſays, (ver. 41.) So that either theſe are bad Accounts of his Appearance, or the Diſciples were bad ſort of Believers. If it was ſo hard to make Believers believe, they were not far from Unbelievers; and therefore we may hope for the more Grace hereafter, who have here no Evidence of Chriſt's Reſurrection, nor of his Appearance, fit to convince a reaſonable Man.

The Appearance of Jeſus upon the Day of his Reſurrection was to one Woman alone, then to two or three or more, for a Minute or two, in the Morning early, or to them altogether. He ſupped and dined with none that we read of. At ſome Time of the Day afterwards ſomewhere he appeared to ſome *Simon* or other, and either before or after two Men Incog. one unknown, who knew ſo little whether it was him or no, and told their Story ſo evangelically, that they could not convince the other Diſciples of the Truth of it; nor could *Mary*, nor the reſt of the Women, nor this *Simon*, ſo that Jeſus was forced to come himſelf, and ventured to ſlip in among them at Candle-light, which was ſo dim, that they were forced partly to feel him out, *Luke* v. 39. One would have thought it more natural and reaſonable, firſt to appear to them altogether, by Appointment, in or near *Jeruſalem*, where he and they are deſcribed to have been, at Noon-day, and faced the Sun itſelf. Why had none but his Diſciples the Gift of ſeeing him? This Objection alone, raiſed from what the Evidence confeſs, that he was never ſeen in Public afterwards, though he roſe again for a public Good, is ſufficient to over-balance all that can poſſibly be urged in Favour of it. Some want to know what Jeſus ſaid to theſe two Diſciples, when he opened their Underſtandings, that they might underſtand the Scriptures, and think the Secret ſhould have been revealed, not conſidering, that the Men who get their Livings by the Secrets of their Function muſt not blab them; if they did, the Myſtery would be at an End, and their Gain be gone. The Magi underſtand Magic better; if he opened their Underſtandings, they never open ours, nor ever will, no, they live by confounding them; for when that Lock is opened, we ourſelves ſhall keep the Keys of the Kingdom.

§. 32. *Of unintelligible Hiſtory, and the manner of defending it.*

They object, that I don't underſtand the Scriptures. Sir, I

own it; therefore I propoſe my Objections, that I may be taught to underſtand it: But I find thoſe that pretend to teach others know as little, ſince they don't agree how it is to be underſtood; 'tis plain they do but gueſs at it, and others may gueſs at it as well as they. I don't know, Sir, whether the manner of apprehending the true Knowledge of it be by the Language of *Canaan*, or of *Greece*. I ſee plainly, that 'tis no infallible Rule in itſelf in any Language; for none that make it their Director, whether they expound it by the Help of the Spirit or the Letter, agree in their Expoſitions. As the Senſe is not infallibly clear, there is alſo no infallible Way to know it; therefore Diſbelief and Miſbelief are the certain Conſequents of reading holy Writ, (for there is no Certainty of true Belief, becauſe neither Party do, nor can underſtand it.) Unbelievers are ignorant of the Truth of it; and if Believers had Senſe ſufficient to underſtand it, they would agree in the Senſe of it. It is not to be ſaid the Fault is in the Goſpel, therefore it is in all that read it, whether they are Unbelievers or Believers.

Theſe Defenders, if they cunningly Anſwer an Objection, that the Words of the Text, or the Nature of the Story occaſions, in ſuch manner as to cover the Imperfections of it, though by a different Senſe than 'tis probable the Writers ever meant or deſigned, and of which themſelves are certain they but gueſs, if they make it paſſable, how they vaunt, exult, and crow, as if they were Maſters of the Field; whereas 'tis only like ſkinning over an old Ulcer, that after a while breaks out a-freſh, and diſcovers the latent Corruption, though they affirm ſtoutly to the inſenſible Patient that the Cure is good, and the Fleſh is ſound, when it is plainly tending to a Mortification.

Differences in profane Hiſtory not eaſy to reconcile, impoſed on Mankind to aggrandize Heathen Gods or Heroes, they freely call evident Marks of Fraud or Folly; but in what is called ſacred Hiſtory (though I think Truth only makes Hiſtory ſacred, and Falſehood renders it prophane) theſe to them are plain Proofs of the Simplicity and Integrity of the Writers, 'without the leaſt De-'ſign of Impoſition on the weak 'and credulous Part of Mankind,' (as Mr. *C.* ſays, p. 77.) and the leaſt Agreement in any Part of theſe proves the Truth of the Whole; but in thoſe, the Diſagreement of the Parts is apt to make Men queſtion the Whole, or at leaſt to read it with Caution, and receive it with Diffidence. Such is the marvellous pre-eminence of Goſpel Hiſtory.

§. 33. *On the Harmony of the other Appearance or Appearances.*

'Twould be endleſs, Sir, to trace the Wildneſs of their Imaginations, and ſhew how boldly they gueſs, how weakly they prove, and what Neceſſities they are reduced to. Mr. *C.* p. 125. tartly aſſures us, he will not allow any Thing againſt him without Evidence; but by what Evidence does he prove any Thing, but by that of the Names of Perſons, of whom 'tis unknown whether they ever wrote or read, whoſe Books

Books when or where penned God only knows, have no Authority but their own, though their Stories are ſufficient to amaze the World, yet no Proof remains (beſides theſe Books) that the World knew any Thing of them. Evangelical Harmony no Numbers can confound. The Eleven, *Mark* xvi. 14. *Luke* xxiv. 33. are Ten, to make it tally with *John* xx. 24, and the Eleven at another Time, *Matth.* xxviii. 16. are Twelve, to make it agree with 1 *Cor.* xv. 5. as Mr. *C.* will have it, p. 119, or the Eleven are 500 with Mr. *Sylveſter*, p. 64, and Mr. *Jackſon*, p. 127. with the *Clearer*, p. 133, Ten, Eleven, and Twelve mean the ſame; but he is careful in what Appearance to account for the 500, therefore accounts for it no where, or in none that he mentions. P. 125, Mr. *C.* not knowing how to charge this Account to any in the Goſpel, ſets it by itſelf next to that of *Matthew* xxviii. 16. Mr. *C.* makes *Mark* xvi. 14, and *John* xx. 16, to be the ſame Appearance, becauſe they both intimate that Chriſt appeared to the Eleven, p. 110, 111. But the *Clearer* ſuppoſes the Appearance mentioned by St. *Mark* xvi. 14, is the ſame as that of St. *Luke* xxiv. 36, and St. *John* xx. 19, becauſe St. *Mark* ſays, at that Appearance our Saviour upbraided the Eleven for not believing them, which had ſeen him after he was riſen, which he well ſays, ſhews it was the firſt Time he appeared to them himſelf; and for the ſame Reaſon that of *Matthew* was the firſt Time that he appeared to the Eleven, becauſe *ſome doubted*, which muſt be ſome of the Eleven, becauſe they are expreſly mentioned, and no more: But the Scene of this being placed on a Mountain in *Galilee*, and that of *Mark* and *Luke* at *Jeruſalem*, becauſe they cannot make *Galilee* and *Jeruſalem* the ſame Place, they will have it that it was a different Appearance; but they have no other Reaſon to make it ſo, but the Diſtreſs the different Accounts reduce them to, to make them agree. As to this Appearance, for which you have three Evidences, they do not agree; that to *Mary Magdalene*, for which they have four Evidences, they agree worſe, ſo that the more Evidence we have, the worſe is the Proof: And as for the other Appearances, for which you have only ſingle Evidences, and extreme ſhort ones, they cannot diſagree, except they had ſaid a little more to diſagree with themſelves. Lo theſe are the Proofs of the Harmony of the Goſpel!

§. 34. *Of the other Appearances of Jeſus, according to the Defenders.*

Sir, I now purpoſe to give you at one View, in what Order the Defenders range the Appearances of Chriſt, after he appeared to the two Diſciples going to *Emmaus*; whereby, Sir, you will ſee, that though they are all certain that I am wrong in ſaying, according to *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*, that Jeſus made but one Appearance to his Diſciples, yet that they cannot agree how certainly to underſtand them as different Appearances; and though they ſay I confound one Appearance with another, yet it appears themſelves are confounded in what Order, to take them. I have ſeparated every Appearance by a Line, according to their different Definitions of the Text.

Mr. *Sylveſter.*	*The Clearer.*	Mr. *Chandler.*	Mr. *Jackſon.*
Mark xvi. 14. *Luke* xxiv. 36. *John* xx. 19.	*Mark* xvi. 14. *Luke* xxiv. 36. *John* xx. 19.	*Luke* xxiv. 36.—40. *John* xx. 19.—24.	*Luke* xxiv. 13. 15. 16. 30 ——44. *Mark* xvi. 12, 13, 14. *John* xx. 19, 20. 24.—29.
John xx. 24.	*John* xx. 26.	*Mark* xvi. 14. *John* xx. 16.—29.	
John xxi. 1.	*John* xx. 21.	*John* xx. 1. 12. 14.	*Matth.* xxviii. 16, 17. 18.
Matthew xxviii. 16. this to 500.	*Matthew* xxviii. 16. *Luke* xxiv. 49. *Acts* i. 4.	*Matth.* xxviii. 16.--20. 1 *Cor.* xv. 5.	1 *Cor.* xv. 5, 6, 7. *John* xxi. 1, 2.
Mark xvi. 19. *Luke* xxiv. 50. *Acts* i. 3.	*Acts* i. 6. *Luke* xxiv. 51. *Mark* xvi. 19.	1 *Cor.* xv. 6. 1 *Cor.* xv. 7. 1 *Cor.* xv. 7.	*Luke* xxiv. 50, 51, 52. *Acts* i. 3. 9. 12.
	He omits thoſe in 1 *Cor.* xv. ſaying his Account creates no Difficulty.	*Luke* xxiv. 46.—31. *Acts* i. 4.—9.	

These Texts are eaſily ſeen in thoſe affixed to my *Reſurrection conſidered.*

If the Appearances of Jeſus in the Evangeliſts can be reconciled, they think all is proved, though this they attempt in vain; and though there is not the leaſt Intimation they are ſo to be underſtood, in order to be reconciled, therefore, a new Revelation is neceſſary, that we may underſtand the old. They reconcile as many as they can, as well as they can, and the others they call different Appearances.

If Jeſus's Diſciples followed him before his Death to *Jeruſalem*, why ſhould he afterwards order them to go to meet him in *Galilee*, then trudge them back again to *Jeruſalem?* It ſeems by St. *John*, as if the Diſciples after their Maſter's Reſurrection went to *Galilee*, and followed their Occupation, and only ſaw Jeſus there by Accident, as a Viſitor, that eat a bit with them and went his Way.

St. *Matthew* ſays the Angel, and Jeſus too, gave Orders for the Diſciples to meet him in *Galilee*, therefore, he ſays, they went and ſaw him there.

St. *Mark* tells us, the young Man (*i. e.* a young Angel) bade the Women tell the Diſciples they ſhould ſee Jeſus in *Galilee*; but of the Appearance of Jeſus that he gives us, he forgot to mention the Time and Place, therefore we may ſuppoſe it to be where we pleaſe; but he gives not the leaſt Intimation of any other Appearance.

According to St. *Luke*, two Men in ſhining Garments (Angels becauſe of their heavenly Apparel) reminded the Women what Jeſus ſaid in *Galilee*, that he ſhould riſe again, but not a Word that the Diſciples ſhould meet him there; therefore he tells us nothing of the Diſciples going into *Galilee*, but makes his Appearance at *Jeruſalem*. St. *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke* deliver it as plain as they tell any Story, for the firſt as well as the laſt Time, for they give us not the leaſt Intimation of any before to the Eleven, nor *Matthew* of any after. St. *Luke* is plainly one connected Story, all from firſt to laſt on the Day of the Reſurrection. There is not the leaſt Appearance in St. *Matthew*, *Mark*, or *Luke*, that either of them dreamed, or thought of any other than that which each of them mention. But theſe in After-times not being thought ſufficient, St. *John*, like one newly riſen to make new Revelations, tells of more, and gives Liberty to others to ſtretch after him; accordingly, the Author of the *Acts* tells us, he was forty Days before he aſcended; and St. *Paul*, that he appeared to more than five hundred at one Time; but unluckily for Infidels, for they were every one Brethren, nor does it appear he either ſaw or was ſeen by any other all the while.

'Tis a jeſuitical Way of Reaſoning, that becauſe one Evangeliſt does not abſolutely deny in *totidem verbis* what another ſays, therefore 'tis allowed to be true, and ſo both are right. Is all then that may be ſaid of Chriſt true, if not contradicted by the Evangeliſts? Is the Goſpel of the Infancy of Jeſus true, becauſe none of our Goſpels flatly deny it? Does not the *Romiſh* Clergy make this the

the Plea for all their unſcriptural Tradition, that they are not forbidden?

Tho' 'twas promiſed the Holy Ghoſt ſhould bring all Things to their Remembrance, if this Promiſe was made good to them, it was to ſo little Purpoſe, that never were Men better qualified for their Buſineſs, and did it worſe; their Memory was very little, or their Negligence very great, or their Capacities exceeding bad, not to give us a better Account of what Jeſus did during the forty Days he abode with them, which ought to have been journalized; the appearing of Jeſus after his Reſurrection was the moſt eſſential Part of his Life. This was done, as the AUTHOR OF THE *TRIAL* allows, to convince the World of his Character; yet we don't find he appeared to convince any but his Diſciples, or to make one Convert more than he had done before; ſo that either he roſe from the Dead to a very little Purpoſe, or we have a very wretched Account of it.

One would imagine, if a Man is raiſed from the Dead, it is to ſome great End, not merely to catch Fiſh, eat and drink, and viſit his Friends. If five hundred ſaw Jeſus after he was riſen, where and when was it? And why do none of the Evangeliſts mention it, but becauſe they knew nothing of it; for had they known it, it had been an inexcuſable Neglect to be ſilent about it; as alſo not to mention the other public Appearances of Jeſus after his Reſurrection, if they knew of any. Three Goſpel-writers are very careful to acquaint us of what mighty Power the Devil had, how he carried Jeſus about from the Top of an exceeding high Mountain to the Top of the Temple, as one has it, or from the Temple to a Mountain, as another relates it, and perſecuted him forty Days; ſo that he could not eat a bit of Bread all that while, becauſe he would yield to no Temptation: How Devils poſſeſſed many Perſons, and particularly the Man they kept Day and Night in the Tombs, and made him ſo ſtrong, that no Fetters could bind him, that he had an Army of Devils within him. What ſhould induce them to poſſeſs that poor Fellow in ſuch Crouds, as if there were no more Men in the World to give them a Lodging, I cannot imagine. What Execution might theſe five thouſand Devils have done, if they had ſeparated themſelves, and taken every Devil his Man. Then, that Jeſus to gratify the Devils, ſhould ſuffer them to ruin the *Gadarenes*, by deſtroying two thouſand of their Swine, is ſurprizing: Theſe, and ſuch like Stories, which in any other Book it would be no Crime to call them Romantic, they tell us, as it were, after one another; but the perſonal Appearances of Jeſus after his Reſurrection are ſo miſerably related, as if they thought thoſe Relations of no Importance, or of not ſo much as thoſe, concerning which I dare not be diverting, becauſe you, Sir, are ſo very grave.

St. *John*, who is allowed to write after all the reſt, and unluckily contradicts them all, tells us Stories of the Appearances of Jeſus in *Jeruſalem* and *Galilee*; but then he talks nothing of his Diſciples going back again to *Jeruſalem*,

ruſalem, but that Jeſus parted with him in *Galilee*, going indeed ſome where, and ordering *John* to ſtay till his Return; but when that Return was, we want another Goſpel to inform us. The ſtraining the Senſe of St. *Matthew*, *Mark* and *Luke*, to take in the Stories of St. *John*, the *Acts*, and St. *Paul*, is what would not be done to reconcile any other Hiſtorians in the World, eſpecially in relating uncommon and unaccountable Things: We ſhould ſay of them, that they were not fit to be credited.

'Tis quite abſurd, that *Matthew* ſhould mention only Jeſus meeting his Diſciples in *Galilee*, if he knew or thought of their Meeting any where elſe, and at that Time, that ſome who ſaw him ſhould doubt, if they had ſeen him before at *Jeruſalem*; therefore this Apparition of St. *Matthew*'s relating at *Galilee*, appears, according to him, to be the firſt and laſt Time he appeared to the Eleven, as he had appointed, which Appointment cuts off all Expectation of their ſeeing him in *Jeruſalem*, and all Reaſon for believing that Appearance.

'Tis quite abſurd to ſuppoſe, that St. *Mark* and *Luke* ſhould mention only the laſt Appearance, without giving the leaſt Hint of any former, if they knew or thought of any other at the Time of Writing; and if this was not deſigned by them, as the only one. It is abſurd, and looks like an Interpolation in St. *Mark*, that the Angels ſhould order the Diſciples to meet Jeſus in *Galilee*, yet not mention one Word of his meeting them there. And St. *Luke*'s Account cuts off all Reaſon for believing that Meeting.

And 'tis quite abſurd, that Jeſus ſhould be forty Days preſent with his Diſciples after his Reſurrection, and be ſeen by above five hundred Brethren at once, and none of the Evangeliſts in the leaſt mention either the one or the other.

Permit me, Sir, to remark the deep Diſtreſs the Defenders are reduced to, to anſwer my Objections, and make the different Accounts agree, (yet all in vain) though they tranſlate and tranſpoſe Words and Sentences as they pleaſe, add Senſe, and take away at Pleaſure, (intolerable in any but orthodox Believers.) From forced Conſtructions and diſtorted Parts they repeatedly aſſert, that all is natural, plain and conſiſtent; whereas nothing is more evident, than that a Senſe ſo remote from the natural Meaning of the Words, and ſuch Diſlocation of Parts which they make, prove the Hiſtory to be very contrary to theſe Aſſertions. This Diſtreſs makes them ſpit their Spleen freely, which would have choaked them elſe. *The Poiſon of Aſps is under their Lips*; I paſs over and deſpiſe the many Inſtances of it, which are no Proofs of the Goodneſs of their Nature, nor their Arguments. As I promiſed you, Sir, at firſt to regard the Subject alone; ſo I have kept my Promiſe. Truth is the plaineſt, and Virtue the beſt natured Thing in the World; but Error and Falſehood being Blots in Nature, (if I may ſo call them) and Mazes of Perplexity, plunge Men into thoſe Torments, in which *they gnaw their Tongues for Pain*, and where *there is gnaſhing of Teeth*. I do not expect them

to

to quit the Darkneſs they are involved in; but having anſwered all their ſeeming Arguments, I now bid them good Night.

I proceed to make ſome Remarks on the hiſtorical Text.

§. 35. *Of the Miracles performed when Jeſus was apprehended.*

When Jeſus was ſeized by the Officers and Soldiers ſent to take him, 'tis ſaid, they were ſtruck down backwards by his Word, and that he healed *Malchus*'s Ear, which *Peter* had cut off; but he might as well have done nothing: For tho' they fell to the Ground by a miraculous Power, without any miraculous Power they ſeized him afterwards. And tho' *Malchus*'s Ear was cut off, and immediately healed, we read not a Word of its being mentioned at his Trial: And though St. *Mark* and St. *John* ſay, that one of the Diſciples cut off the High Prieſt's Servant's Ear, yet they don't ſay Jeſus cured it, which is very ſurprizing. They muſt be bleſſed Hiſtorians, that omit giving an Account of the beſt and principal Part of a Story. Sir, they tell us there was bloody Work in the taking of Jeſus, and not the wonderful Cure that was immediately wrought. A little more, and *Peter* had cleaved *Malchus*'s Head, for I ſuppoſe he miſſed his Aim in cutting off his Ear; tho' that might have been as eaſily cured as this: For the Power of working Miracles being once granted, 'tis not to be limited; and exceeding all human Reaſon, can as eaſily cure a cleft Skull as a cut Finger, and raiſe a dead Man, as cure a Paralitic. That the High Prieſt's Servant ſhould loſe his Ear in taking Jeſus, if it was not cured, as two Evangeliſts ſeem to know nothing of, and one of theſe two was preſent at the Action, the other, ſome ſay, had it from *Peter*'s own Mouth, it muſt have exceedingly irritated the High Prieſt. If it was cured, ſurely St. *Mark* and St. *John* are inexcuſable to omit ſo remarkable an Action of him, whoſe Life they wrote; and 'tis as wonderful, that it was not mentioned at the Trial, nor mitigated the Reſentment of the High Prieſt againſt Jeſus: But of this there is not a Word, nor of any Perſons appearing to Witneſs any of his other Cures.

§. 36. *Obſervations on the Hiſtory of* Judas.

Another Obſervation, Sir, I have made out of theſe Hiſtorians, is concerning *Judas*, who St. *Matthew* xxvii. ſays, *repented, brought again the thirty Pieces of Silver, and went and* hanged *himſelf*; and that the *Chief Prieſts bought a Field with the Money to bury Strangers in, which being the Price of Blood, that Field was called the Field of Blood.* But in *Acts* i. 18. we are told, that *Judas purchaſed a Field with the Reward of Iniquity, and falling headlong, he burſt aſunder in the Midſt, and all his Bowels guſhed out; therefore that Field was called the Field of Blood.* Now here are two different Stories, not eaſy for me to reconcile, therefore I deſire they would try their Parts, who have the Knack of it, and are Men of ſubtil Invention. How the falling down of *Judas*, and burſting his Guts, agrees with his hanging

hanging himſelf, I cannot tell: And I would be informed, how *Judas* bought a Field with his thirty Pieces of Silver, and afterwards died in that Field, agrees with his returning the Silver to the Chief Prieſts, and went and hanged himſelf, and they afterwards bought a Field with the Money to bury Strangers in; and whether it was called the Field of Blood for the one Reaſon or the other before-mentioned. I don't preſume to call theſe Contradictions or Inconſiſtencies; no, in profane Hiſtory it would be ſo, but being ſanctified by the Word of God, the Contradiction vaniſhes.

§. 37. *Obſervations on ſome Circumſtances at the Crucifixion.*

Permit me, Sir, to remark how little theſe Hiſtorians regarded Exactneſs in their Narrations: I obſerve, they don't agree exactly in the Words of the Title over the Croſs, that all *Jeruſalem* might read; for 'tis, according to

St. *Matthew*, *This is Jeſus the King of the Jews.*

St. *Mark*, *The King of the Jews.*

St. *Luke*, *This is the King of the Jews.*

St. *John*, *Jeſus of Nazareth the King of the Jews.*

St. *Mark* xv. 25. ſays, it was the third Hour, when they crucified Jeſus; but St. *John* xix. 14. tells us, 'twas the ſixth hour, when Jeſus ſtood before *Pilate*, before he delivered him to be crucified.

I obſerve concerning the Thieves that were crucified with Jeſus, that St. *Matthew* tells us, *they caſt the ſame* (reproaches) *in his Teeth*, as the People did. St. *Mark*, they that were crucified with him, reviled him. St. *Luke*, that one only railed on him, and that the other rebuked the Railer.

'Tis obſervable, Sir, that the Hiſtorians do not agree in their Reports of the miraculous Stories at the Crucifixion; but I do not ſay they diſagree, only that ſome of them ſeem to write what the others knew nothing of, or had forgot, Miracles being at that Time ſo common, they were not regarded. St. *Matthew* relates that the Vail of the Temple was rent in twain, the Earth quaked, and the Rocks rent, the Graves were opened, and many Bodies of the Saints which ſlept aroſe, and came out of their Graves after Chriſt's Reſurrection, and went into the holy City, and appeared unto many. St. *Mark* only tells us of the rending of the Vail of the Temple in twain; St. *Luke*, that there was Darkneſs over all the Earth three Hours, and the Vail of the Temple was rent in the Midſt. St. *John* relates no Wonders at the Death of Jeſus, but that he ſeemed to take Notice of his Mother. Strange Hiſtorians theſe, to omit the principal Parts of the Hiſtory they wrote, for ſuch they were, if they were any Parts of it; but 'tis very excuſable in the Writers, for in a Century or two Men are apt to forget. And 'tis to be feared ſome of the Goſpels made a very late Appearance, even our St. *Matthew* the very firſt of them; the Story of the dead Saints ariſing at the Reſurrection of Jeſus, ſeems to ſhew it was wrote after the Doctrine of Purgatory took Place, or that Story looks as if it was then

then lugged in, which is ſaid to be about the latter Part of the ſecond Century. This Story is very remarkable, and the more ſo, becauſe none of the others make any Remark of it. I know my Adverſaries tell me, 'tis nevertheleſs true. It may be ſo in their Opinion; I am ſure there is ſo much the leſs Proof of it, and the leſs Proof there is of a Thing, the leſs Reaſon there is to believe it, and the more to ſuſpect it. Is the Proof of God's Truth leſs than that of Man's? Leſs reaſonable? Leſs probable? And leſs poſſible? Is God's Truth darker than Man's Truth? Or of leſs Conſequence, that it is ſo careleſly tranſmitted to us? This Story of the Saints Reſurrection deſerves a particular Conſideration and Enquiry.

It ſeems, Sir, by the Account, that the Crucifixion of Jeſus gave ſuch Diſturbance to many ſleeping Saints, that their Bodies could not reſt in their Graves, nor their Souls in Heaven, if they were there, or elſe there muſt have been a Jail-delivery from Purgatory, for the Souls of Saints do not go to Hell. Theſe Graves, 'tis ſaid, opened at the Crucifixion of Chriſt, and the Bodies came out after his Reſurrection, whence I ſuppoſe they ſtood gaping open all that Time, which made it the more known, therefore the more remarkable, when *many*, that is, not a few *Bodies*, nor Souls only, of the Saints which ſlept aroſe. Whether this was written to ſupport the Goſpel of *Nicodemus*, or this Story gave Occaſion to that, I know not. This Reſurrection of the Saints was more miraculous than the Reſurrection of Jeſus, for God knows how long ſome of them had ſlept; however they were *Bodies*, not Skeletons, and they might as well have new cloaths given them as new Fleſh, and new Bones as either. Beſides, in the Winter-time, to go bare would make all the City ſtare at them; but Saints would not go into the *holy* City in an unholy manner, as void of Shame; therefore 'tis fit to conclude they had Cloaths on, and new Cloaths too, for where ſhould they find their old ones, which had new Poſſeſſors, or were new modelled, or worn out. They went into the holy City; where elſe ſhould Saints walk? But, was that the *New Jeruſalem* or the *Old?* The *Old* it could not be, for that was *called* Sodom *and* Egypt, '*where* '*our Lord was crucified*,' and which he himſelf ſaid was worſe than *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*. Is the *New Jeruſalem* the holy City? No doubt of it; but no Body ever yet ſaw that, therefore no Body could ſee the Saints there; then the Saints appeared no where. 'Tis ſaid they *appeared unto many*; but unleſs they viſited their late Acquaintance, other People might not know they had been dead. But though they appeared, they only appeared. I do not read that they ſaid a Word to any, nor any one to them, or gave them any Entertainment. Tho' theſe new raiſed Saints had got their Tongues with them as well as their Legs, and ſo might have uſed one as well as the other, yet they were mute as Ghoſts; they might as well have ſlept ſtill in their Graves, for when they came out, no Body knew nor regarded them

them but St. *Matthew*; but ſure he did not raiſe them, for he was an Apoſtle, and we are well aſſured the Apoſtles were no Conjurers. Did no one aſk any of theſe travelling Saints, what News from *Hades?* Did they only ſtare and look about them? Or, being ſleepy, did they walk in their Sleep? Had they teſtified the Reſurrection of their great Deliverer, this had been a proper Errand. Never was the like heard of. The *Dii minores*, or leſſer Gods, ſent from one World to make their public Entrance in another, to ſay and do nothing! Well, but how long did they ſtay? And what became of them? Where did they go, to Heaven, or to ſleep again? As this Reſurrection was in the Dark, we are left in the Dark about it.

§. 38. *Reflections on the miraculous Gift of Tongues.*

Indulge me, kind Sir, to tell you, that the pretended miraculous Proofs, ſaid to be given by the Apoſtles to confirm the Reſurrection, want Proofs of their own Veracity. 'Tis no Wonder one Miracle is ſaid to be wrought to prove another; Miracles are defended by nothing but Miracles; for if they could be proved by any Thing elſe, that Proof would be a Miracle. *De quibus nutrimur, ex iis exiſtimus:* Homogeneous Things nouriſh and ſupport each other; Fleſh is ſupported by Fleſh, Life by Life, Truth by Truth, Lies by Lies, Fraud by Fraud, and Force by Force. It is altogether as improbable as it is unaccountable, that *Peter*, with the reſt of the Apoſtles and a ſtrong Gale of Wind, ſhould bring three thouſand Converts into the Haven of Faith in one Day. Whether theſe came in ſpontaneouſly as free Agents, or drove in by a mighty Wind, and compelled by Streſs of Weather, is a Query? For I don't ſee any Thing ſo wonderfully convincing in *Peter*'s Sermon to produce it, and leſs Reaſon to believe their receiving the Gift of Tongues; for after this they were ſtill *ignorant* and *unlearned*, *Acts* iv. 13. and St. *Paul*, who we never read had that Gift by Inſpiration, but knew no more than what he had been taught, ſays, 1 *Cor.* xiv. 18. *I thank God I ſpeak with Tongues more than they all.* If ſo, all of them did not ſpeak many Tongues, though we are told that all the Hearers of every Nation under Heaven *heard every Man ſpeak in his own Language*; and therefore wondering (as well they might) ſaid, *how hear we every Man ſpeak in our own Tongue*; inſinuating, as I ſuppoſe, Sir, that every Apoſtle ſpoke every Language. But if this was the Caſe, how could ſome of them aſcribe it to Drunkenneſs? Wine is ſo far from inſpiring Men with the Gift of Tongues, that it oft-times deprives the Tongue of its Gift. Or did the Apoſtles only ſpeak one Tongue, and the Holy Ghoſt, the Interpreter, made each Hearer believe that what each Speaker ſaid was ſpoken in his own Tongue? If ſo, did the Holy Ghoſt ſpeak in their Ears, and the Devil in their Hearts at the ſame Time, to ſay they were drunk? If the Goſpel was then preached to every Nation under Heaven in this wonderful manner,

ner, 'tis wonderful that no Nation under Heaven ſhould mention it but this nameleſs Author. 'Tis ſaid, *cloven Tongues of Fire ſat upon each of them.* Was the Holy Ghoſt divided then, or how many Holy Ghoſts were there; and who ſaw, beſides the Diſciples, theſe cloven Tongues? If they alone ſaw for all the reſt, their Eyes ſaw double.

§. 39. *Remarks on Jeſus being the Son of God.*

Matthew and *Luke* repreſent Jeſus to be the Son of God, by the Holy Ghoſt over ſhadowing the Body of the Virgin *Mary*, (which would be thought a blaſphemous Notion, and heathen Invention, if not ſupported by Goſpel Authority;) yet in the *Acts* (xiii. 32, 33.) *Paul* being diſtreſſed for a Prophecy of the Reſurrection of Jeſus, applies th reto his being begotten of God, in theſe Words; *And now we declare unto you glad Tidings, how that the Promiſe, which was made unto the Fathers, God hath fulfilled the ſame unto us their Children, in that he hath raiſed up Jeſus again, as it is written in the ſecond Pſalm, Thou art my Son, this Day have I begotten thee.* If by this Means Jeſus was the begotten Son of God, he could not be his *only* begotton Son, if *Lazarus* was raiſed from the Dead before; for then *Lazarus* was *the firſt begotten of the Dead*, and ſo Chriſt's elder Brother. If Jeſus was begotten of God, and brought forth by *Mary*, how was he the Seed of *David* according to the Fleſh? Had *Mary* not been above three or ſeven Years old, the Miracle had certainly been the greater; but thus it pleaſed the Lord to eſpouſe himſelf to the Church, who, I fear, is no Virgin.

§. 40. *Obſervations on St.* John's *Goſpel.*

Permit me, Sir, to add a few Obſervations on St. *John*'s Goſpel, becauſe the *Clearer* tells us, that it was wrote, 'not with De-'ſign of repeating what the other 'Evangeliſts had fully delivered, 'but chiefly to preſerve the Me-'mory of what they had omitted.' Yet St. *John* tells the ſame Story as St. *Matthew* and St. *Luke*, of Chriſt's walking on the Water in bad Weather, and in the Night, when he might have gone by Shipping; a Journey that ſcarce any one would have choſe, beſides himſelf, had it been in his Power. St. *Matthew* indeed ſays, St. *Peter* had a Fancy to do the ſame, but had like to have been ſopt for it, and glad he was to get aboard again with wet Feet, the Floor gave way; he ſeems to have been over Shoes and Boots, if he had any; *Peter* began to ſink; it was his ſtony Heart that weighed him down: They had ſuch natural hard Hearts, that a ſupernatural Power could not keep them ſoft. But St. *Mark* and St. *John* omit that Part of the Story; yet St. *John* is ſuppoſed to be preſent. But, *Cui bono?* where's the Goodneſs of this Action?

St. *John* alſo tells the ſame Story as St. *Matthew* and St. *Mark* do, of Chriſt's feeding the Multitude with five Loaves and two Fiſhes; and to this St. *John* adds ſomething ſo very remarkable, that 'tis worth Notice. The People

People whom Jeſus had fed in the Wilderneſs with Bread and Fiſh, as much as they could eat, took Shipping, five thouſand of them, beſides Women and Children, which no doubt made as many more; (how they found tranſports ready for ſuch a Number, we are not to enquire;) and when they had found him on the other Side, and he admoniſhed them to believe in him, thoſe very people ſaid to him, *What Sign ſheweſt thou, that we may ſee and believe thee? What doſt thou work?* As if they believed nothing of Yeſterday's Miracle, of which they had had a Belly-full, *Our Fathers*, ſay they, *did eat Manna in the Wilderneſs, as it is written, he gave them Bread from Heaven to eat.* A ſurprizing Objection, when Jeſus had given them Bread and Fiſh too both from Heaven, (tho' he found the Seed of them on Earth.) Nay, the very Diſciples themſelves did not conſider, or had already forgot the Miracle of the Loaves, as if the Miracle was eaſier of Digeſtion than their Food. Poor Creatures, their Hearts were hardened! Never did Maſter take ſo much Care, and exert ſo much Power, to teach his Scholars and the People in ſo extraordinary a manner, to ſo little Purpoſe! Jeſus did not ſatisfy their carnal Minds, as he had done their carnal Maws, with a Sign from Heaven, he was above being tempted. They ſaid, *Our Fathers did eat Manna in the Deſert, he* (Moſes) *gave them Bread from Heaven to eat*, Jeſus told them, that he himſelf was Bread from Heaven, and they were to eat him; but ſuch Sort of Bread they could not reliſh: Beſides, that eating Fleſh with the Blood in it was forbidden by the *Moſaic* Law. The eating his Fleſh and drinking his Blood was ſo ill digeſted by them, that *many even of his Diſciples went back, and walked no more with him*, thinking no doubt, as his Brethren did, that he was beſide himſelf. and conceived a very mean Opinion of him from ſuch unintelligible Diſcourſe.

St. *John* writes, that Jeſus came up to *Jeruſalem* at a Feaſt of the Paſſover, ſoon after his Beginning to make himſelf public, *John* ii. 13, *&c.* and that *then* it was he drove the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple, when the Jews required him, ſince he acted in that manner, to ſhew his Authority by ſome Sign or Miracle; he anſwered, *If they would deſtroy that Temple, he would build it up in three Days*; but he very well knew, according to their Underſtanding of his Words, they neither could nor would try him. And as St. *John* has it, he went into and returned from his own Country three Times afterwards. But the other Evangeliſts tell us of his coming to *Jeruſalem* but a little before he ſuffered, and then it was according to them that he drove the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple.

As it was the Buſineſs of this Evangeliſt to ſet forth Jeſus as God, it behoved him more than the reſt to give us a Narration of his divine Extraction; *HOW the Word was made Fleſh.* He might ſuppoſe with Reaſon that all Chriſtians did not ſee all Goſpels, and that his might be ſeen by thoſe who never ſaw any others; beſides, ſo wonderful a Story, if true, could not be too well atteſted and confirmed; it is ſurely of more Importance than that which

the other Hiſtorians were aſhamed of, *viz.* the drunken Marriage Feaſt.

St. *John* acquaints us, that Jeſus went into *Samaria*, and made Diſciples there. But St. *Matthew* (xv.) that when he ſent his Miſſionaries to diſciple the Jews, he expreſly forbad them going *into any City of the Samaritans*, and declared, *he was ſent only to the loſt Sheep of the Houſe of Iſrael.*

Permit me, Sir, to remark, there is no Rule in Reaſon to judge of miraculous Reports, but by the Ability and Honeſty of the Reporters, nor of their ſagacity and fidelity, but by the Ability and Honeſty of all thoſe that tranſmit their Accounts and Characters to us; and how certain this Rule is, I leave, Sir, to your Conſideration, and whether the Hiſtory of uncommon, ſupernatural, and unaccountable Things are as credible as common and natural Hiſtory. If that of *Julius Cæſar* was mixed with Fable and Romance, the romantic Parts, at leaſt, would not find eaſy Credit with conſiderate Readers. Were Men eaſily to believe ſuch Stories, they would be liable to be everlaſtingly deceived by Falſities, Frauds, and Fictions: 'Tis not reaſonable, therefore, to credit unreaſonable Accounts, that are no better atteſted than holy Writings, which *were ſown in Weakneſs, but are raiſed in Power.* The ſtrangeſt Stories in the World ſhould carry with them the moſt convincing Proofs, to render them credible; and this is the more reaſonable, as the Matters that demand our Belief are ſaid to be of the greater Importance, or may be productive of the greater Fraud and Impoſition; yet ſcarce were ever any Hiſtories received in the World as authentic on ſo dark Teſtimonies, and ſo uncertain Foundation, as thoſe that are with us commonly eſteemed the moſt bright and certain of all hiſtorical Facts in the World. I know 'tis Credulity is a Folly that governs the weak Minds that cannot, and the Idle that will not examine for themſelves, and ever will govern an ignorant World; but the Wiſe will endeavour to judge of ſterling Truths by the Touchſtone of pure Reaſon, which only can diſcover them; and all Faith which cannot bear this Teſt is Folly and Stupidity. In anſwer therefore to Mr. *Jackſon*'s *Addreſs to the Deiſts*, 'tis not impoſſible to prove the Impoſſibility of ſupernatural Revelation.

§. 41. *On the Authority of the Goſpels.*

I believe, Sir, upon the ſtricteſt Enquiry, it will be found impoſſible to us to know for certain who were the Writers of the Goſpels, and the Acts of the Apoſtles, or when, or where they were firſt written, or that they are the ſame as at firſt without Corruption or Innovation; and one would think a Deficiency in any of theſe Points, in their Defence as the uncorrupted Word of God, is ſufficient to ſilence a modeſt Author, and put his Aſſurance out of Countenance: Though the *Clearer* delivers it as if it was a Thing not to be doubted, that St. *Matthew* wrote his Goſpel for the Uſe of the *Hebrews*, when thouſands were living in *Judea* who knew the Circumſtances he reported. And Mr. *Sylveſter* ſays,

it

it was wrote eight Years after Chriſt's Aſcenſion; but neither of them know any Thing of the Matter.

Mr. *Jeremiah Jones* has ſhewn much Care and learning in endeavouring to find out on what Authorities the Goſpels ſtand, in two Volumes to that End, and was far enough from favouring Infidelity: But he is obliged to confeſs,

1. That 'tis impoſſible to aſſign any certain Time when the canonical Books were collected. That there is no Proof they were fixed in the firſt, nor Beginning of the ſecond Century.

2. That they have been all or moſt of them rejected by ſome Chriſtians in the firſt Ages, even by ſome that did not go under the Name of Heretics, as well as by thoſe that did. And ſeveral of them have had their Authority diſputed by learned Men in later Times.

3. *Fauſtus Manichæus*, and his Followers, are ſaid to have rejected all the New Teſtament, as not written by the Apoſtles,

4. The *Allogians* rejected the Goſpel of St. *John*.

5. *Severus* and his Sect rejected the *Acts* of the Apoſtles, and all *Paul*'s Epiſtles.

Certain it is, that Chriſtianity was no ſooner propagated than it was divided into Sects and Parties, and each pretended to be right, and have Chriſt and the Apoſtles on his Side; and therefore forged Books under the Name of ſome Apoſtle or Diſciple; and each Sect have ever condemned the other of Forgery, Hereſy, Ignorance, or Miſconſtruction.

'The learned *Cauſaubon*, than 'whom no one was either more 'acquainted with, or more judi- 'cious in Chriſtian Antiquitites, 'in his Diſſertation againſt *Ba- 'ronius* ſays, I cannot but much 'reſent the Practice of many in 'the earlieſt Ages of the Church, 'who reckoned it an Action very 'meritorious to make Additions 'of their own to the Truths of 'the Goſpel, with this View, 'that Chriſtianity might meet 'with the better Reception a- 'mong the Gentiles. They call- 'ed theſe officious Lies, contriv- 'ed for a pious End. This pro- 'duced innumerable Books in 'thoſe Ages, wrote by Men, not 'bad, under the Name of our Sa- 'viour, his Apoſtles and Follow- 'ers.'

If what *Puppus* in his *Synodicon* ſays be true, it ſhews what an inextricable Dilemma the Church was involved in, to diſtinguiſh what Scripture was proper for them to take and refuſe, ſince they deſired the Lord to chuſe for them, and his miraculous Kindneſs in determining their Choice as directed by them. That the Biſhops aſſembled at the Council of *Nice*, having put together all the Books that pretended to Inſpiration in a Church under the Communion Table, they prayed to God that thoſe which were of divine Inſpiration might be found upon the Table, and thoſe which were Apocryphal under it, and accordingly as they prayed it came to paſs. This Action is not altogether incredible, for ſome Angel of the Church is always at the Church's Service.

St. *Paul*, or ſome one in his Name, was ſo ſanguine, as to adviſe the *Galatians* to receive no Goſpel but his, though it ſhould come

from Heaven, and even to curſe the Angel that brings it.

The Goſpels were kept private more than a Century, at leaſt to Infidels, if they were wrote before. And ſince 'tis owned, that the firſt Ages of Chriſtianity which produced Goſpels abounded with more forged than true, how can we be infallibly certain of the Truth of any.

No ſuch Objections lie againſt profane or heathen as holy Hiſtory. How can the incredible Accounts, delivered we know not by whom, when, where, or how, be ſet on a Level with probable Facts, whoſe Authors and Writings have been generally allowed: What advances the Credit of theſe, and leſſens thoſe is, the Liberty always allowed to be taken with the one, but the Danger there is in ſcrutinizing the other.

§. 42. *Of St.* Matthew's *Goſpel.*

Sandius ſays, it is impoſſible to determine any Thing about its true Author. —— And ſo many Names it has had, or is thought to have had, as ſhew the Doubtfulneſs of its Original.——It is alſo thought to be in many Places altered and interpolated. The *Nazarines* are accuſed of corrupting it almoſt as ſoon as they had it.

Ireneus of *France*, who lived about the Middle of the ſecond Century, is the firſt Father of the Church that writes of the Time, tells us, that *Matthew* publiſhed his Goſpel when *Peter* and *Paul* were at *Rome*. But ſome learned Men have much queſtioned whether thoſe Apoſtles were ever there. Eccleſiaſtic Writers place this in the Year ſixty four, or later, about thirty Years after Chriſt's Death or Aſcenſion. A fine Time, if it was ſo, to begin to write his Life and Reſurrection, to be depended upon for authentic. 'Tis ſtrange, that of him who was ſo famous, as the Evangeliſts report, no Body began it ſooner, and that none wrote it but his negligent Servants, who omitted ſo long, ſo eſſential a Point, on the Faith of which the Salvation of the World depended.

Perhaps ſome ſuch Objection made *Euſebius*, who lived in the Beginning of the fourth Century, ſay *Matthew*'s Goſpel was wrote eight Years after Chriſt's Aſcenſion. And what carries it on his Side againſt *Irenæus* is, that to the End of the old *Arabic* Verſion there is affixed the following Teſtimony: 'The End of the holy 'Goſpel of the preaching of St. '*Matthew*, which he preached in '*Hebrew*, in the Land of *Pale*'*ſtine*, by the Influence of the 'holy Spirit, eight Years after 'our Lord Chriſt aſcended in his 'Fleſh to Heaven, and the firſt 'Year of the *Roman* Emperor '*Claudius*.' And to be ſure the Teſtimony was not interpolated, though the Goſpel was, nor would Believers father a Lie on the Holy Ghoſt. But this *Irenæus* never ſaw, or he would not have ſaid it was written twenty Years later: But *Euſebius*, who came a hundred and fifty Years after, knew exactly the Time of the old Revelation by ſome new one made to him then, or to his Works ſince his Death by the infallible Church. As for *Euſe*-

bius,

bius, 'tis owned he was a credulous Man, and none was guilty of more Miſtakes: Beſides, 'tis ſuppoſed Things have been foiſted into his Works of which he was not the Author.

Notwithſtanding the preceding Teſtimony, it is not agreed in what Language St. *Matthew*'s Goſpel was wrote, the original Text being loſt, nor can the Copies of the Original be determined. Some Fathers of the Church would have it believed it was wrote in *Hebrew*; but many of our firſt Reformers by their learned Criticiſms have endeavoured to prove, that the Goſpel we now have according to St. *Matthew* is from ſome *Greek* Original.

Epiphanius, Biſhop of *Salamis* in *Cyprus*, *Anno* 370, or thereabouts, ſays the Goſpel of St. *Matthew*, uſed by the *Ebionites*, (who it's thought were the firſt Chriſtians) and the *Corinthians* was altered and corrupted, having not the Genealogy, nor the two firſt Chapters. 'Tis much to be queſtioned, whether thoſe Chapters have not been added ſince that Goſpel was firſt written. The marvellous catches the Croud; and he that affirms with moſt Aſſurance is moſt firmly believed.

The *German* Anabaptiſts of the laſt preceding Century, and Dr. *Servetus*, who was burnt for a Heretic, by that heretical Pope *Calvin* at *Geneva*, denied the Credit and Authority of this Goſpel.

§. 43. *On St.* Mark's *Goſpel.*

Concerning St. *Mark*'s Goſpel there is ſcarce any Thing to be found in eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory, which can be depended on: "One *Mark* is mentioned in the *Acts* of the Apoſtles, in St. *Paul*'s Epiſtles, and by St. *Peter*; and 'tis ſuppoſed, that *Mark* was the Author of this Goſpel: But *Grotius*, *Crotelerius*, Dr. *Cave*, *Dupin*, Mr. *Echard*, and other Moderns, are of a contrary Opinion."

Euſebius tells us, that *Clemens Alexandrinus* in one Place, teſtifies St. *Peter*'s Approbation of the Church of *Rome*'s Requeſt to *Mark* to write thoſe Occurrences of the Life of Chriſt, which he had heard of St. *Peter*, which we now call the Goſpel of St. *Mark*, and that St. *Peter* approved of it. In another Place the ſame Author ſays, that St. *Peter* neither encouraged nor obſtructed *Mark* in his Undertaking.

This *Clemens* lived about the Middle of the ſecond Century, and 'tis therefore very likely he knew very little of the Matter; nor might *Euſebius* be well informed of what he ſaid; yet ſuch is Church Authority. There is but little Credit to be given to eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory; the Hiſtorians affirmed what they thought beſt tended to the Good of the Church, and the Church confirmed it; and have condemned and deſtroyed all other.

Irenæus, who lived in the ſecond Century, ſays, that *Mark*, St. *Peter*'s Interpreter, wrote his Goſpel after the Death of *Peter*, what he had heard him preach; but *Origen*, who lived in the third Century, writes, that *Mark* wrote his Goſpel according to the Directions of St. *Peter*; and *Jerom*, who lived in the fourth Century, tells us, that *Peter* publiſhed it in the Churches, and commanded the reading of it by his own Authority: Thus, the later the Hiſ-

torian, the greater the Confirmation. *Fama volans augetur.*

'Tis urged, that the *Syriac*, *Arabic*, and *Perſic* Verſions affirm St. *Mark* to have wrote in *Latin*; to which Mr. *Jones* anſwers, That theſe Epitaphs or Poſtſcripts at the End of theſe Verſions are of very uncertain Authority; and that as to the Time when St. *Mark* wrote his Goſpel, 'tis exceeding difficult to come to any clear Determination, tho' 'tis pretended to be wrote in *Nero*'s Reign.

So that 'tis not knowable for certain, when, where, in what Language, or by whom this Goſpel was wrote; for 'tis ſaid, he wrote what he had heard from St. *Peter* at *Rome*, and 'tis much queſtioned, whether ever St. *Peter* was there. It is thought by ſome, to be only an Abridgment of St. *Matthew*'s Goſpel, with an additional Section concerning Chriſt's Reſurrection after the End of the 8th Verſe, which St. *Jerom* ſays moſt of the *Greek* Copies have not; ſo ſays *Gregory Nyſſene*; but *Grotius* ſuppoſes it was left out with Deſign, becauſe it ſeemed to contradict St. *Matthew*, that *Porphyry*, *Julian*, and ſuch others, might not take Occaſion from thence to ridicule the Goſpel; as Mr. *Fabricius* alſo obſerves, and adds, that 'tis a Caſe like what happened to thoſe Words, *Mark* xiii. 32. to avoid the Force of the *Arian* Objections. It is confeſſed by Mr. *Jones*, Vol. I. p. 564. that the laſt Chapter of St. *Mark*'s Goſpel has ſuffered many Alterations: This ſhews how our Goſpels have been moulded; but it cannot be ſhewn, how they were firſt caſt. *Aaron*'s Calf was, no doubt, a Type of this Lamb.

§. 44. *On St.* Luke's *Goſpel.*

St. *Luke* is ſuppoſed to be the Perſon mentioned in St. *Paul*'s Epiſtles. The Accounts which we have from Antiquity concerning this Evangeliſt, are very ſhort and imperfect: 'Tis ſuppoſed he was no Jew: The Place where, and Time when this Goſpel was wrote, is very uncertain: 'Tis ſuppoſed to be originally written in *Greek*, becauſe 'tis the pureſt *Greek* of all the Evangeliſts.

Marcion and his Followers had a different Goſpel of St. *Luke*, than what we now receive: That Heretic (as the heretical Orthodox ſay) inſerted and left out what he thought convenient, to ſerve his own Purpoſes. Alas! 'tis too common for People to accuſe others of the Crime they are guilty of themſelves; and Sects that differ in their Sentiments have equal Honeſty.

What was called the Goſpel of *Marcion*, was no other than that of St. *Luke*'s altered and interpolated: He left out the two firſt Chapters, and many other Parts, and inſerted many Things of his own, ſay *Irenæus*, *Tertullian* and *Epiphanius*. Or perhaps others have added what they are accuſed of leaving out, and *Marcion* might never find in; and alſo interpolated what they thought a Goſpel Benefit. Nothing is more certain, than that the Truth of theſe Things is moſt uncertain.

§. 45. *Of St.* John's *Goſpel.*

'Tis ſaid, St. *John* wrote his Goſpel to ſupply the Defects of the other Goſpels: 'Tis certain, the other Writers were very defective or negligent, and his ſupply weakens the Force of his Allies.

lies. Tis alſo ſaid, that it was written to confute the Ebionites, Nicolaitans, Marcionites, and others, who denied the Divinity of Chriſt; by which it appears, the primitive Chriſtians were not Idolaters, nor Worſhippers of a compound Deity.

This Goſpel is confeſſed to have been written almoſt an hundred Years after the Birth of Chriſt, or between ſixty and ſeventy Years after his Death. *Epiphanius* ſays, St. *John* wrote it in the nintieth Year of his Age: And this Goſpel is ſaid to be written in *Greek* originally; tho' St. *John* was an unlearned *Hebrew*, into which Tongue it is ſaid to be afterwards tranſlated. With theſe incredible Circumſtances it paſſes with the Church for St. *John*'s Goſpel: Whoever wrote it, 'tis certain it has ſuffered Alterations; for the Chapter of the adulterous Woman is not in the old *Syriac* Copy, nor ancient *Greek* Manuſcript.

§. 46. *Of the* Acts *of the Apoſtles.*

The Authority we have, that St. *Luke* is the Author of the *Acts*, is from a Conjecture of *Irenæus*, though 'tis not known, who this *Luke* was, a Diſciple of Jeſus or not; for he calls him the Diſciple and Follower of the Apoſtles: This Conjecture of *Irenæus* is founded on, 2 *Tim.* iv. 11. applied to *Acts* xvi. 10, 11, 12. 16, 17. where the Writer ſpeaks not in the Name of *Paul* in the firſt Perſon ſingular, but as a Companion of *Paul* in the firſt Perſon plural. But in my Opinion, this gives more Reaſon to believe it was *Silas* than *Luke*; for the plural Perſon WE is uſed by the Writer after *Paul* had choſe *Silas* for his Companion, and not before. Beſides the *Acts* of the Apoſtles could not be wrote by St. *Luke* becauſe of the Diſagreement in the Time of Chriſt's abode on Earth after his Reſurrection, which, according to St. *Luke* was but one Day, but according to the *Acts* is forty Days.

All the ſucceeding Fathers of the Church aſcribe the *Acts* of the Apoſtles to St. *Luke*, being ſo directed by *Irenæus*; for they follow one another in a Track. What one ſays or conjectures, which makes for the Good of the Cauſe, the others take for granted, and affirm. St. *Chryſoſtom* confeſſes, that it was not known by whom this Book was written.

It is alſo confeſſed, that ſome of the firſt Chriſtians, the Cerinthians, Manicheans and Marcionites rejected this Book as falſe and ſpurious.

That the Tranſcribers made Alterations in this Book is evident from the Confeſſion of *Eraſmus*, who ſaid he found more curious Readings in the Manuſcripts of this, than any other of the ſacred Books.

There was another *Acts* of the Apoſtles received by the Manicheans: The different Sects of Chriſtians could never agree in receiving the ſame Goſpels, and therefore each forged or altered a Goſpel to their own Minds, according to the Principles they had imbibed. Thoſe whoſe Faith did not correſpond with the Goſpel, made Goſpels to correſpond with their Faith, as every Believer now does, in explaining thoſe they have. The prevailing Sect were always Orthodox, and accuſed the others of being ignorant Heretics, of adding and

taking away from the Goſpels according to their own Fancies; and were the Accuſed to anſwer for themſelves, they would ſay the ſame of their Accuſers.

§. 47. *Of Chriſtian Hereſies.*

'Tis certain, that no ſooner did Chriſtianity appear, but Factions, Parties and Hereſies immediately ſprung up, and have ever remained, and are ever likely to do ſo, as long as it exiſts. What's the Meaning of this? Truth is clear and plain, uniform and harmonious; but Error is obſcure and intricate, everlaſtingly dividing and ſubdividing itſelf, an inexhauſtible Fund of Diſagreement and Contention. When Truth is expreſſed to look like Error, that is not to be underſtood; it may be productive of the ſame ill Conſequences as Error is, but then Error is the Occaſion of it, that is, the Error of Expreſſion; and if Truth puts on the Garb and Appearances of Error, no Wonder if it be miſtaken for it, and have the ſame Influence. One would think, that the Truth of God would appear like him, good, bright and lovely; for Truth delights not to put on the Garb of Error, nor does Wiſdom love to wear the Maſk of Folly, nor is it the Property of real Goodneſs to ſculk in the Shades of Darkneſs, and hide itſelf in Obſcurity. It is not the Nature of Love and Piety to produce Contentions, Envyings, Hereſies and Perſecutions; its Nature is to ſend Peace on Earth, not Fire and Sword; nor is it diſpoſed to kindle the one, nor does it adviſe to ſell one's Garment to buy the other.

A Religion founded on bare Authority, not conducted by the Choice of Reaſon, will admit of innumerable Pretenſions and Impoſtures. Hence ariſes the exceeding Difficulties of diſtinguiſhing Right from Wrong, Truth from Falſhood: But if we take Reaſon and Nature for our Guide the Diſtinction will be clear and eaſy.

Ever ſince the Revelation of Chriſtianity, different Sects have riſen up among them: The Weeds of Hereſies have plentifully ſprouted out of this Ground, but the true Plant among Chriſtians is hard to be found; they had ever more Credulity than Wiſdom, and more Zeal than Virtue. Each Sect have always thought it right to do wrong, *i. e.* to advance the Goſpel or their Party, by forging Falſhoods or concealing Truth.

Nothing is plainer, than that the New Teſtament Books received their Sanction from the Authority of the Church only, for none but the Church ever received them at all. And what makes any Doctrines be called Orthodox, but the Succeſs the Maintainers have had, who call themſelves the catholic Church, by ſuppreſſing all other. And why are others deemed or damned for Heretics by the triumphant Party, but becauſe the ſuffering Party cannot help themſelves. The Armour of Faith, without the carnal Sword, does not compleat the Wedding Garment of the Church Militant. Nothing but Succeſs can diſtinguiſh Orthodoxy from Hereſy; for where both Sides are poſitive they are right, and the Proof is on no Side, Power only can

can determine the Controverſy. There can be no other Right to Orthodoxy where there is none in the Reaſon and Nature of Things, and neither Side can find a Proof there: They cannot ſubmit to be tried by that Court, whoſe Authority is condemned by them all, becauſe it favours none: For poſitive Precepts and Doctrines pretended to be given by that Court above, *i. e.* a ſupernatural Court, refuſe all Trial by the Inferior Court of Nature. This is the preſumptive Authority of all Hereſy. That Party which riſes as by the Fortune of War, and vanquiſhes the reſt, calls itſelf Orthodox, which is but another Word for Conqueror, and the vanquiſhed Party is conſequently declared heretical. Orthodoxy therefore is only triumphant Hereſy; and the Authority of the Fathers which are on their Side, are no more right, than the Uſurpation of Mother Church is, ſo that nothing can be proved true from that Quarter. Had the vanquiſhed Heretics prevailed, their ancient Teachers had been Fathers of the Church, their Doctrines had been Orthodox, and their Goſpels, Epiſtles, Acts, and Revelations would have had the Sanction of the Inſpiration of the Spirit; ſince the Defenders of every ancient Hereſy eſpouſed ſome Books peculiar to themſelves, that were ſo called. Every Sect received ſuch Books for canonical, as were for their Purpoſe, or made them ſo; and the victorious Party burnt and deſtroyed, as far as they were able, all that they diſliked. *Cyril* of *Jeruſalem* adviſes his Catechumen to reject all ſacred Books not contained in his Catalogue, and not to read them. The ſame the Council of *Laodicea*, in the Middle of the fourth Century. The earlieſt Chriſtians, *viz.* the Nazarines, Ebionites, Cerinthians, Nicolaitans, Valentinians, Menandrians, Carpocratians, Montaniſts, Gnoſtics, Manicheans, Cerdonites, Marcionites, Tatianites, *&c.* are all condemned for Heretics by the other Sects, and thoſe that lived after them, and ſo were almoſt all of the firſt Century, except Chriſt and the Apoſtles, by the riſing Orthodox of ſucceeding Centuries. The Fathers of the Church, from whoſe Credit the canonical Books are received, lived about the Beginning of the third Century; a dark Time to depend upon for Light; and darker followed, which clouded that, and all that went before it.

If Books are to be received as God's Word by his poſitive Command, we ought to be poſitively ſure of them, or no Impoſition and Deceit is more eaſy. If the Canon of the Scripture depends upon tradition, then it depends upon human Authority; but that of its Divine, muſt reſt upon its own intrinſic Worth: This is the only Rule of judging its Truth and Purity, for doing which the learned Mr. *Jeremiah Jones* gives us the following Rules.

§. 48. *Mr.* Jones's *Rules to judge of canonical Books.*

Mr. *Jeremiah Jones* lays down theſe Rules, among others, to judge of the canonical Authority of any Book, by which the Impartial may try if ours will bear the Teſt.

1. That

1. That Book is certainly Apocryphal in which are found any Contradictions; for as both Sides of a contrary Propoſition cannot be true, ſuch Book muſt neceſſarily contain ſomewhat that is falſe, and conſequently cannot have God for its Author, nor be to us a Rule of Doctrine and Manners.

2. That Book is certainly Apocryphal which either contains any Hiſtories, or propoſes any Doctrines contrary to thoſe which are certainly known to be true. To impute ſuch a Book to the Holy Ghoſt, is to make God the Author of a Lie; and 'tis not fit to take that for our Guide in Matters of the laſt Conſequence, which we know to be not only fallible but falſe.

3. That Book is Apocryphal in which are contained Things ludicrous or trifling, fabulous or ſilly Relations. God, a Being of infinite Wiſdom and Knowledge, cannot give us ſuch Books as argue him guilty of Weakneſs and Folly, and impoſing on his Creatures Things to be believed contrary to their moſt improved Reaſon; nor can Men of Honeſty and Wiſdom be the Authors of ſuch Sort of Books: for if they wrote what they did not believe, they were notorious Impoſtors; if they did believe, they were Perſons of ſhallow Capacities and fooliſh Credulity; the former deſerve our Hatred, and the laſt our Pity. Theſe are no fit Guides to Mankind. "This Obſervation, (ſays he) is not only evidently true, but of the greateſt Neceſſity in the Buſineſs we are now about; for 'tis certain, that a very great Number of the apocryphal Books of the New Teſtament are filled with the moſt idle and trifling Stories, the moſt ridiculous and extravagant Fooleries imaginable. The romantic Accounts of *the Virgin* Mary*'s Nativity, being bred by Angels, and fed by them in her Infancy*, &c. the childiſh Relations *of our Saviour's Infancy and Education, his learning the Alphabet, his Stature, appearing ſometimes as a Child, ſometimes as a Man, ſometimes ſo tall that his Head would reach the Clouds, the Length of his Hair, Beard*, &c. *the Spirit's taking him up to Mount Thabor by one of his Hairs*, &c. the ſilly Miracles attributed to the Apoſtles, with all the ridiculous Circumſtances that attended their ſeveral Martyrdoms, *&c.* are each, with all the other Stories like them, unqueſtionable Arguments to prove the Books which contain them Apocryphal; and to be no other than either the Works of the weakeſt of Men, who were fondly credulous of every Report, and had not Diſcretion enough to diſtinguiſh between Senſe and Nonſenſe, between that which was credible, and that which was not ſo; or elſe the artful Contrivance of ſome who were more zealous than honeſt, who thought by theſe ſtrange Stories to gain Credit to their new Religion."

Mr. *Jones* very juſtly argues, Vol. 1. p. 11. that the receiving Books for inſpired, which are not ſo, the Conſequences are evidently very bad.

1. We thereby offer a notorious affront to our Maker, by impoſing Forgeries, *&c.* to the Inſpiration of the Holy Spirit.

2. We thereby aſſent to the moſt groſs and notorious Errors as indubitable Truths, and ſo very

ry often ſhall be like to oblige ourſelves to many burdenſome imaginary Duties, not only not required of God, but contrary to his Will, p. 13.

How careful then, Sir, ſhould Men be to enquire and aſſure themſelves indubitably what the inſpired Books are. And how can we give our aſſent, where we have not full and clear Evidence? And how can leſs Evidence be ſatisfactory? For our aſſent to any Propoſition can only be in Proportion to its Evidences.

§. 49. *Concluſive Queries.*

I purpoſe to conclude with propoſing a few Queries reſulting from the preceding Enquiry.

Tho' each Interpreter of Scripture and Goſpel-preacher conceits himſelf (if he is honeſt) to be right in his Judgment, and therefore requires the Aſſent of others to his own Notions as the Truth of the Goſpel; yet as they cannot agree among themſelves what the Truth of the Goſpel is, to whom, or upon what Score ſhould we give our Aſſent? If to him that has the greateſt Reaſon and Probability on his Side, whether it be not juſt and neceſſary to enquire into, and judge of Things by their Reaſon and Probability?

How is the Goſpel the Revelation of God, if Men cannot underſtand it who honeſtly endeavour to do it?

Why ſhould Men be ſo bitter (as theſe Gentlemen are) in vindicating what is out of their Power to underſtand, explain, or defend?

Whether 'tis not an evident Mark of great Weakneſs and Folly in Men, (to ſay no worſe) not to agree in the Circumſtances of an extraordinary Fact, or not to be able to tell an important Story (which 'tis ſaid, was well known to the Relaters) in a conſiſtent and intelligent manner?

Whether 'tis fit, that the ill-connected Tales of credulous and ignorant Men ſhould be attributed to the Direction of a divine, unerring Spirit, or be called Goſpel, or God's Word?

Whether credulous and ignorant Men are proper Judges of Truth; that we ſhould receive it arbitrarily from them? How is it agreeable to the Wiſdom of God, to chuſe the moſt ignorant and unlearned (if not fooliſh and wicked Men) for the Meſſengers of his Will, and the Diſcloſers of his Council and Wiſdom?

Whether the Holy Ghoſt is not given to Believers now, as well as in the Apoſtles Time? If not, what Reaſon have we, but that of the blind Authority of uncertain Tradition, that it was ever given?

If the Holy Ghoſt be given to Believers now, what are the evident Proofs of it, (beſides believing) whereby it may be diſtinguiſhed from Nature? And whether that can be known to be an infallible Spirit, which cannot be infallibly known?

Whether 'tis conſiſtent with the Goodneſs and Infallibility of God, that the Salvation of Mens Souls ſhould in any Meaſure depend upon their believing the precarious and uncertain Accounts of weak and fallible Men?

And whether any Authority, not founded in the Nature and Reaſon of Things, is to be received as the ſacred Injunctions of Divine Truth?

Where

Where is the Goodneſs or Virtue of taking Things upon Truſt, believing without Evidence, and the reaſonable Means of Conviction, as the credulous, unthinking Herd do, whoſe Creed, like Clock-work, goes as it is directed by others, without being themſelves ſenſible, whether they are right or wrong? Since Mankind have been groſly impoſed on in ſuch Caſes, to their very great Injury and Deſtruction, and a right Judgment of Things has a manifeſt Advantage to their Benefit, where is the Crime of making an honeſt Enquiry? Or rather, is not a reaſonable Inſpection and Scrutiny convenient and neceſſary?

Be pleaſed, Sir, to bear in Mind, that the Deſign of this Enquiry is to ſhew, that *the Evidence given is not ſufficient to ſupport the Credit of ſo extraordinary an Event*, and to demonſtrate, that true Religion or Righteouſneſs is not founded on an hiſtorical Faith, and the Credit of mighty Actions that have weak Proofs; but on plain Philoſophy, on the conſtant and certain Difference, Nature and Reaſon of Things, in which conſiſts the Knowledge of whatever is neceſſary to diſcover and promote human Happineſs; and that *Chriſtianity as old as the Creation* is the only true Religion in it.

Your real and faithful Friend,

And humble Servant,

MORAL PHILOSOPHER.

20 JY 64

FINIS.

I want wisdom to inform my Faith —
Another Faith directs this wisdom — The
difference between us is only this — I can
believe all possible & probable things —
the other can believe all things, that he
hath been taught — tho' improbable &
impossible! P.P.

36. Fathers of the Church
46. St Jerom (note)
52. St Pauls Doctrine.
66. Miracles at Sauls Conversion.
76. Pauls Spirit - Vision - & Devil.
94. Elymas blinded by Paul.
109. Rabbi Nathan.
134. Belief not a Duty.
146. His wrong to expect things in a wrong way.